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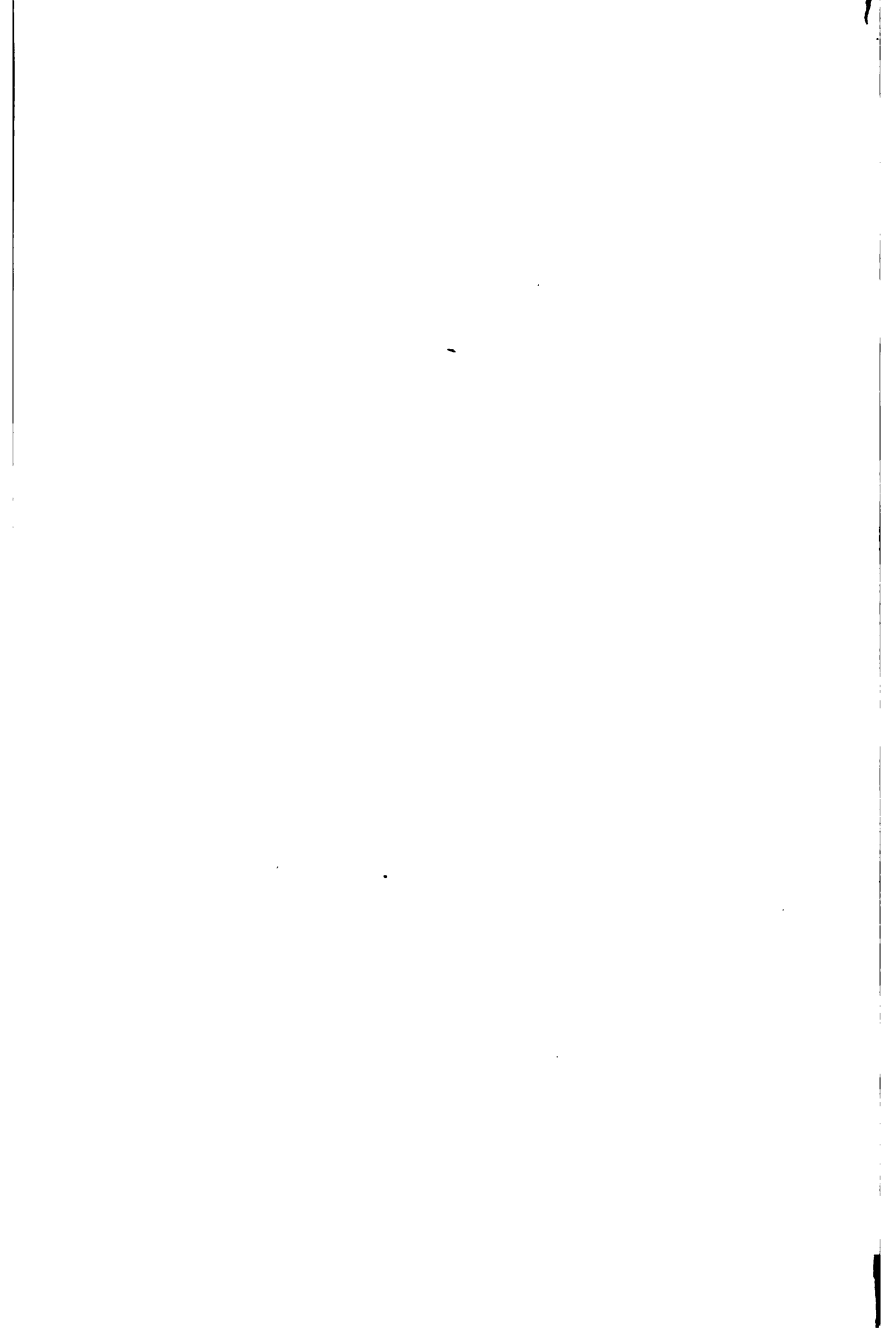


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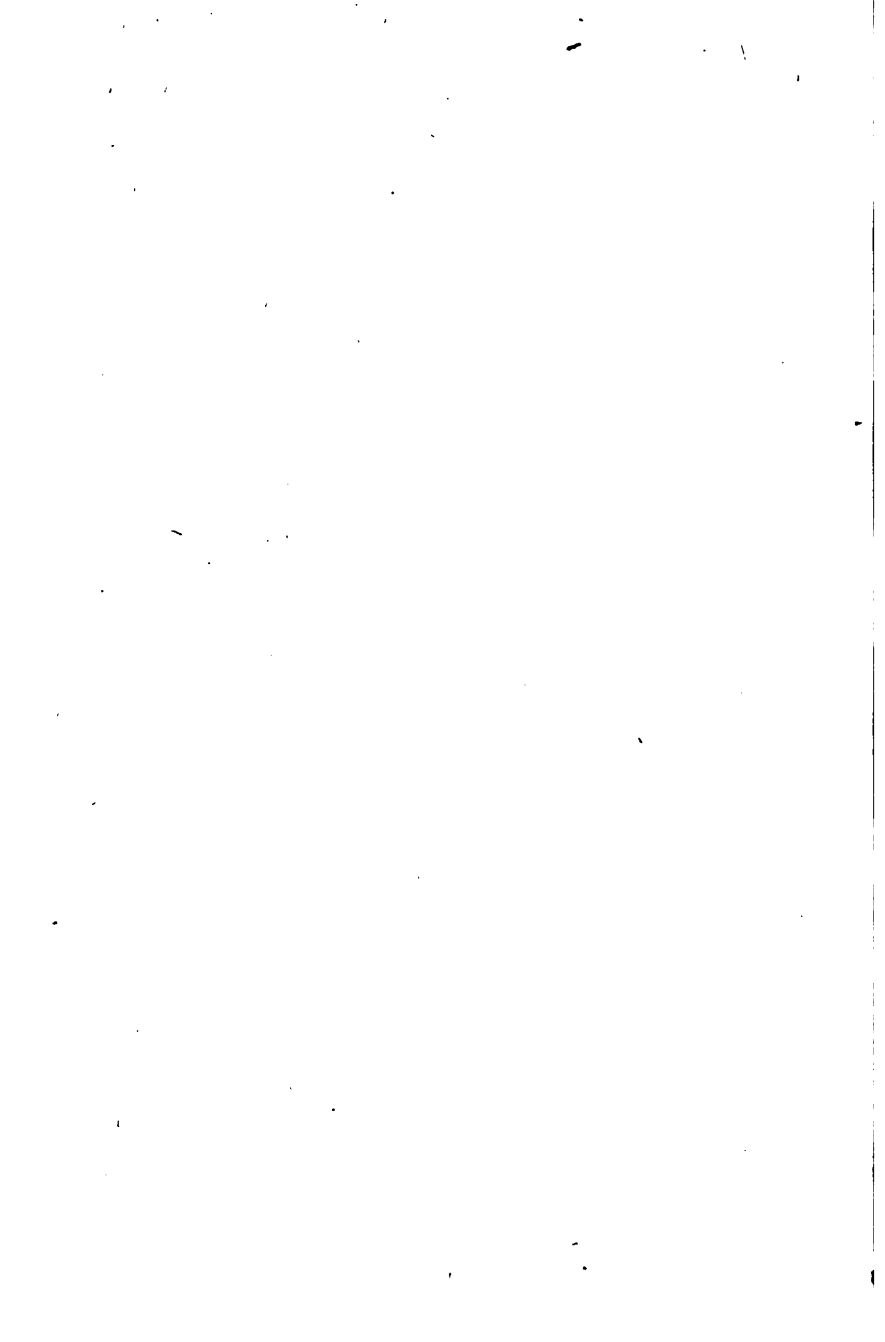
Class of 1855

OF CAMBRIDGE













THE
NEW EDUCATION

THREE PAPERS

BY

GEORGE HERBERT PALMER

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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PREFACE.

IN this little book I have attempted to explain to non-professional people some recent tendencies in education which have been much misunderstood. A mode of college discipline which, when rightly employed, proves a powerful engine for maturing the character of students has been supposed, both by advocates and opponents, to be a contrivance for letting boys do as they please. *Laissez-faire* methods, let-alone methods, have been confused in many minds with elective methods. To clear up this confusion I have exhibited here in some detail the safeguards which a well-contrived elective system throws around its students. I have tried to show

the ethical principles on which wise election rests ; and I have drawn attention to the special conditions of our time which at present render some sort of elective system a necessity. I hope such a survey will throw light on the question how a young student may encounter most safely the risks which his transformation into manhood involves. The dangers of the evolutionary period are great. We are not likely to guard against them adequately till we see that the opportunity of personal choice is a necessary part of the cure, as it unquestionably is the cause, of our perplexities.

The three papers which make up the book were first published in the "Andover Review," in the numbers for November, 1885, December, 1886, and January, 1887. They are now printed substantially as originally written. Although in time of publication so far apart, they form a connected series. The first announced a thesis which soon met vigorous opposition.

Some writers directly attacked my views ; some described institutions where my problems were solved in other, and, as the writers believed, in better ways. The more important of these antagonistic articles are the following : *Education New and Old* ; G. T. Ladd, Andover Review, January, 1886. *The Elective System of the University of Virginia* ; J. M. Garnett, Ibid. April. *The Group System of Studies in the Johns Hopkins University* ; D. C. Gilman, Ibid. June. *Individualism in Education* ; J. H. Denison, Ibid. *The Harvard "New Education,"* G. H. Howison, Ibid. *The "New Education" at Harvard and Yale* ; New Englander, March. *The Elective Policy* ; D. H. Chamberlain, Ibid. May. *The System of Instruction and Government at Harvard College* ; Samuel Brearley, Jr., New York, G. P. Putnam, 1885. *President Eliot's Report* ; A. F. West, Independent, May 6, 13, 1886. *The Elective System at the University of Michigan* ; W. H. Pettee, Nation, May 13, 20, 1886.

These articles confirmed my confidence in the elective principle, but they also convinced me that a much more elaborate exposition of it was needed when men so earnest and candid as my critics could believe that in opposing election they were doing education a service. To this supplementary exposition, and to an examination of other possible methods, the last two papers are devoted.

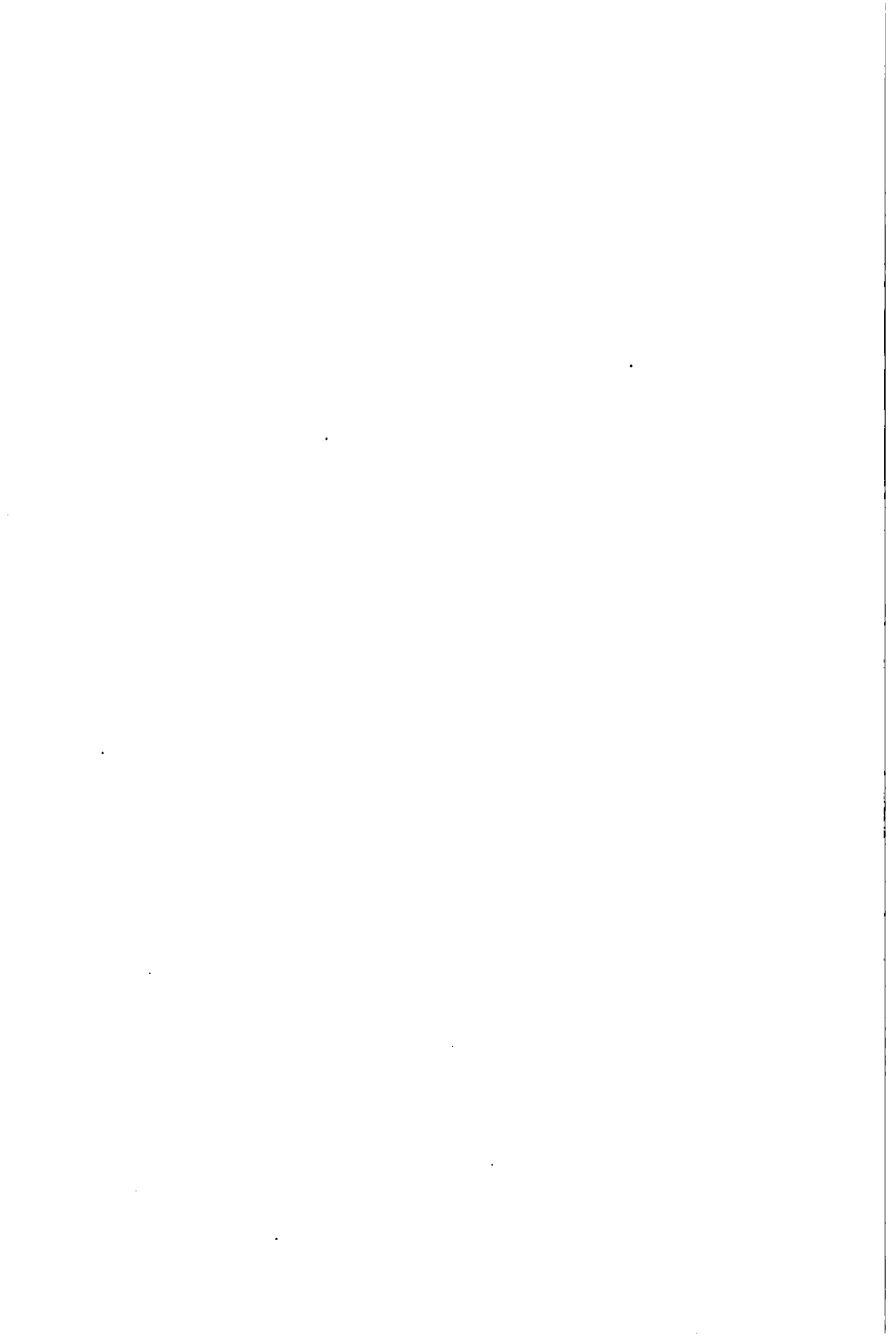
It should always be borne in mind that the particular modes of choice described as now in use at Harvard are no finalities. Undoubtedly they will soon be bettered in other colleges ; bettered too, I hope, at Harvard every year. Already changes in the methods of religious instruction and in the marking system have carried vivifying influences into tracts of college life hitherto left sterile. Other changes will follow. Special forms do not abide. Yet I believe there is a tolerably well determined ideal of educated manhood toward which most of our colleges are moving.

The perception of this steadfast ideal makes many otherwise bewildering changes intelligible. To point out what this ideal is, and so to purify and strengthen its influence, is the object of my writing.

CAMBRIDGE,

Feb. 21, 1887.







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THE NEW EDUCATION.

DURING the year 1884-85 the Freshmen of Harvard College chose a majority of their own studies. Up to that time no college, so far as I know, allowed its first year's men any choice whatever. Occasionally, one modern language has been permitted rather than another; and where colleges are organized by "schools," — that is, with independent groups of studies each leading to a different degree, — the freshman by entering one school turns away from others, and so exercises a kind of selection. But with these possible exceptions, the same studies have always been required of all the members of a given freshman class. Under the new

Harvard rules, but seven sixteenths of the work of the freshman year will be prescribed; the entire remainder of the college course, with the exception of a few exercises in English composition, will be elective. A fragment of prescribed work so inconsiderable is likely in time to disappear. At no distant day the Harvard student may mark out for himself his entire curriculum from entrance to graduation.

Even if this probable result should not follow, the present step toward it is too significant to be passed over in silence, for it indicates that after more than half a century of experiment the Harvard Faculty are convinced of the worth of the elective system. In their eyes, option is an engine of efficiency. People generally treat it as a concession. Freedom is confessedly agreeable; restive boys like it; let them have as much as will not harm them. But the Harvard authorities mean much more than this. They have thrown

away that established principle of American education, that every head should contain a given kind of knowledge; and having already organized their college from the top almost to the bottom on a wholly different plan, they now declare that their new principle has been proved so safe and effective that it should supplant the older method, even in that year where students are acknowledged to be least capable of self-direction. On what facts do they build such confidence? What do they mean by calling their elective principle a system? Does not the new method, while rendering education more agreeable, tend to lower its standard? Or, if it succeeds in stimulating technical scholarship, is it equally successful in fostering character and in forming vigorous and law-revering men? These questions I propose to answer, for they are questions which every friend of Harvard, and indeed of American education, wishes people pressingly to ask. Those most likely to ask

them are quiet, God-fearing parents, who, having bred their sons to a sense of duty, expect college life to broaden and consolidate the discipline of the home. These are the parents every college wants to reach. Their sons, whether rich or poor, are the bone and sinew of the land. In my judgment the new education, once understood, will appeal to them more strongly than to any other class. But it is not easy to understand it. My own understanding of it has been of slow growth. When, in 1870, I left Andover Seminary and came to teach at Harvard, I distrusted the more extreme developments of the elective system. Up to 1876, I opposed the introduction of voluntary attendance at recitations. Not until four years ago did I begin to favor the remission of Greek in the requisites for entrance. In all these cases my party was defeated; my fears proved groundless; what I wished to accomplish was effected by means which I had opposed. I am therefore that desirable per-

suader, the man who has himself been persuaded. The misconceptions through which I passed, I am sure beset others. I want to clear them away, and to present some of the reasons which have turned me from an adherent of the old to an apostle of the new faith.

An elementary misconception deserves a passing word. The new system is not a mere cutting of straps ; it is a system. Its student is still under bonds, bonds more compulsive than the old, because fitted with nicer adjustment to each one's person. On H. M. S. Pinafore the desires of every sailor receive instant recognition. The new education will not agree to that. It remains authoritative. It will not subject its student to alien standards, nor treat his deliberate wishes as matters of no consequence ; but it does insist on that authority which reveals to a man his own better purposes and makes them firmer and finer than they could have become if directed by himself alone. What the amount of a

young man's study shall be, and what its grade of excellence, a body of experts decides. The student himself determines its specific topic. Everybody knows how far this is from a prescribed system; not so many see that it is at a considerable remove from unregulated or nomadic study. An American at a German university, or at a summer school of languages, applies for no degree and is under no restraint. He chooses whatever studies he likes, ten courses or five or one; he works on them as much as suits his need or his caprice; he submits what he does to no test; he receives no mark; the time he wastes is purely his own concern. Study like this, roving study, is not systematic at all. It is advantageous to adult students, — to those alone whose wills are steady, and who know their own wants precisely. Most colleges draw a sharp distinction between the small but important body of students of this class — special students, as they are called — and the great company

of regulars.¹ These latter are candidates for a degree, are under constant inspection, and are moved along the line only as they attain a definite standard in both the quantity and quality of their work. After accomplishing the studies of the freshman year, partly prescribed and partly elective, a Harvard student must pass successfully four elective courses in each of his subsequent three years. By "a course" is understood a single line of study receiving three hours a week of instruction; fifty per cent of a maximum mark must be won in each year in order to pass. Throwing out the freshman year, the precise meaning of the Harvard B. A. degree is therefore this: its holder has presented twelve courses of study selected by himself, and has mastered them at least half perfectly.

Here, then, is the essence of the elective system, — fixed quantity and quality of

¹ In 1884-85 the special students at Harvard, in the college proper, numbered seventy.

study, variable topic. Work and moderate excellence are matters within everybody's reach. It is not unfair to demand them of all. If a man cannot show success somewhere, he is stamped *ipso facto* a worthless fellow. But into the specific topic of work an element of individuality enters. To succeed in a particular branch of study requires fitness, taste, volition,—incalculable factors, known to nobody but the man himself. Here, if anywhere, is the proper field for choice ; and all American colleges are now substantially agreed in accepting the elective principle in this sense and applying it within the limits here marked out. It is an error to suppose that election is the hasty "craze" of a single college. Every senior class in New England elects a portion of its studies. Every important New England college allows election in the junior year. Amherst, Bowdoin, Yale, and Harvard allow it in the sophomore. Outside of New England the case is the same. It is true, all the

colleges except Harvard retain a modicum of prescribed study even in the senior year; but election in some degree is admitted everywhere, and the tendency is steadily in the direction of a wider choice. The truth is, Harvard has introduced the principle more slowly than other colleges. She was merely one of the earliest to begin. In 1825, on the recommendation of Judge Story, options were first allowed, in modern languages. Twenty years of experiment followed. In 1846 electives were finally established for seniors and juniors; in 1867 for sophomores; in 1884 for freshmen. But the old method was abandoned so slowly that as late as 1871 some prescribed study remained for seniors, till 1879 for juniors, and till 1884 for sophomores. During this long and unnoticed period, careful comparison was made between the new and old methods. A mass of facts was accumulated, which subsequently rendered possible an extremely rapid adoption of the system by other col-

leges. Public confidence was tested. Comparing the new Harvard with the old, it is plain enough that a revolution has taken place; but it is a revolution like that in the England of Victoria, wrought not by sudden shock, but quietly, considerably, conservatively, inevitably. Those who have watched the college have approved; the time of transition has been a time of unexampled prosperity. For the last fifteen years the gifts to the University have averaged \$250,000 a year. The steady increase in students may be seen at a glance by dividing the last twenty-five years into five-year periods, and noting the average number of undergraduates in each: 1861-65, 423; 1866-70, 477; 1871-75, 657; 1876-80, 808; 1881-85, 873.

These facts are sufficient to show that Harvard has reached her present great prosperity by becoming the pioneer in a general educational movement. What made the movement general was the dread of flimsy study. Our world is larger than

the one our grandfathers inhabited; it is more minutely subdivided, more finely related, more subtly and broadly known. The rise of physical science and the enlargement of humanistic interests oblige the college of to-day to teach elaborately many topics which formerly were not taught at all. Not so many years ago a liberal education prepared men almost exclusively for the four professions,—preaching, teaching, medicine, and law. In the first century of its existence one half the graduates of Harvard became ministers. Of the graduates of the last ten years a full third have entered none of the four professions. With a narrow field of knowledge, and with students who required no great variety of training, the task of a college was simple. A single programme decently covered the needs of all. But as the field of knowledge widened, and men began to notice a difference between its contents and those of the college curriculum, an effort was made to enlarge the latter by

adding subjects from the former. Modern languages crept in, followed by sciences, political economy, new departments of history, literature, art, philosophy. For the most part, these were added to the studies already taught. But the length of college days is limited. The life of man has not extended with the extension of science. To multiply subjects was soon found equivalent to cheapening knowledge. Where three subjects are studied in place of one, each is pushed only one third as far. A crowded curriculum is a curriculum of superficialities, where men are forever occupied with alphabets and multiplication-tables, — elementary matters, containing little mental nutriment. Thorough-going discipline, the acquisition of habits of intellectual mastery, calls for acquaintance with knowledge in its higher ranges, and there is no way of reaching these remoter regions during the brief season of college life except by dividing the field and pressing along paths where personal friction is

least. Accordingly, alternative options began to be allowed, at first between the new subjects introduced, then between these and the old ones. Liked or dreaded, option was a necessity ; but in its inevitable adoption a new principle was introduced whose germinal force could not afterwards be stayed. The old conception had been that there were certain matters a knowledge of which constituted a liberal education. Compared with the possession of these, the temper of the receiving mind was a secondary affair. This view became untenable. Under the new conditions, college Faculties were forced to recognize personal aptitudes, and to stake intellectual gains upon them. In assessing the worth of studies, attention was thus withdrawn from their subject-matter and transferred to the response they called forth in the apprehender. Hence arose a new ideal of education, in which temper of mind had pre-eminence over *quæsitæ*, the guidance of the powers of knowing over the store of

matters known. The new education has accordingly passed through two stages of development : first, in order to avoid superficiality when knowledge was coming in like a flood, it was found necessary to admit choice ; secondly, in the very necessity of this admission was disclosed a more spiritual ideal of the relation of the mind of man to knowledge.

And this new ideal, I hold, should now commend itself not as a thing good enough if collateral, but as a principle, organic and exclusive. To justify its dominance a single compendious reason is sufficient : it uplifts character as no other training can, and through influence on character it ennobles all methods of teaching and discipline. We say to our student at Harvard, "Study Greek, German, history, or botany, — what you will ; the one thing of consequence is that you should will to study something." The moral factor is thus put forward, where it belongs. The will is honored as of prime consequence. Other systems treat it as

a merely concurrent and auxiliar force. They try to smuggle it into operation wrapped in a mass of matter-of-course performances. It is the distinctive merit of the elective system that it strips off disguises, places the great facts of the moral life in the foreground, forces the student to be conscious of what he is doing, permits him to become a partaker in his own work, and makes him perceive that gains and losses are immediately connected with a volitional attitude. When such a consciousness is aroused, every step in knowledge becomes a step toward maturity. There is no sudden transformation, but the boy comes gradually to perceive that in the determination of the will are found the promise and potency of every form of life. Many people seem to suppose that at some epoch in the life of a young man the capacity to choose starts up of itself, ready-made. It is not so. Choice, like other human powers, needs practice for strength. To learn how to choose, we must choose.

Keep a boy from exercising his will during the formative period from eighteen to twenty-two, and you turn him into the world a child when by years he should be a man.¹ To permit choice is dangerous; but not to permit it is more dangerous, for it renders dependency habitual, places outside the character those springs of action which should be set within it, treats personal adhesion as of little account, and through anxiety to shield a young life from evil cuts it off from opportunities of virile good. Even when successful, the directive process breeds an excellence not to be desired. Plants and stones commit no errors. They are under a prescribed system and follow given laws. Personal man is in continual danger, for to self-direction is attached the prerogative of sin. For building up a moral manhood, the very errors of choice are serviceable.

¹ The average age of the students who entered Harvard last year was eighteen years and ten months. The number considerably above or considerably below the average is small in every class.

I am not describing theoretic advantages. A manlier type of character actually appears as the elective principle extends. The signs of the better life are not easy to communicate to those who have not lived in the peculiar world of a college. A greater ease in uprightness, a quicker response to studious appeal, a deeper seriousness, still keeping relish for merriment, a readier amenability to considerations of order, an increase of courtesy, a growing disregard of coarseness and vice, a decay of the boyish fancy that it is girlish to show enthusiasm, — tendencies in these directions, hardly perceptible to others, gladden the watchful heart of a teacher and assure him that his work is not returning to him void. Every company of young men has a notion of what it is "gentlemanly" to do. Into this current ideal the most artificial and incongruous elements enter. Perhaps it is counted "good form" to haze a freshman, to wear the correctest cut of trousers, to have a big biceps muscle,

or to be reputed a man of brains. Whatever the notion, it is allegiance to some such blind ideal, rather than the acceptance of abstract principles of conduct, which guides a young man's life. To change ever so little these influential ideals is the ambition of the educator ; but they are persistent things, held with the amazing conservatism of youth. When I say that a better tone prevails as the elective system takes root, I mean that I find the word "gentleman," as it drops from student mouths, enlarging and deepening its meaning from year to year, departing from its usage as a term of outward description and drawing to itself qualities more interior. Direct evidence on a matter so elusive can hardly be given, but I can throw a few side-lights upon it. Hazing, window-smashing, > disturbing a lecture-room, are things of the past. The office of Proctor—the literary policeman of the olden time—has become a sinecure. Several years ago the Faculty awarded Honorable Mention at graduation

to students who attained a high rank in three or more courses of a single department. The honor was not an exalted one, but being well within the powers of all it soon became "not quite the thing" to graduate without it. In the last senior class 91 men out of 191 received Honorable Mention.¹

This last fact shows that a decent scholarship has become reputable. But more than this is true: the rank which is reckoned decent scholarship is steadily rising. I would not overstate the improvement. The scale of marking itself may have risen slightly. But taking the central scholar of each class during the last ten years, — the scholar, that is, who stands midway between the head and the foot, — this presumably average person has received

¹ It is often asked whether a young man choosing studies for himself will choose them coherently. Will he not scatter among many subjects the attention which should be concentrated? These figures give the answer. Nearly half the members of the last senior class chose at least three closely related courses.

← —

the following marks, the maximum being 100 : —

YEAR.	1874-75.	1875-76.	1876-77.	1877-78.	1878-79.	1879-80.	1880-81.	1881-82.	1882-83.	1883-84.
Fresh.	59	55	57	56	62	62	65	67	64	63
Soph.	59	64	63	65	67	68	70	69	69	68
Jun.	67	65	66	67	70	68	72	75	72	72
Sen.	67	70	70	73	76	73	77	75	79	81

It will be observed that the marks in this table become higher as the student approaches the end of his course and reaches the years where the elective principle is least restricted. Let the eye pass from the left upper corner of the table to the right lower corner and take in the full significance of a change which has transformed freshmen, doomed to prescribed studies and half of them ranking below sixty per cent, into seniors so energetic that half of them win four fifths of a perfect mark in four electives. It is not only the poor who are affected in this way. About half the men

who appear on the Rank List each year receive no pecuniary aid, and are probably not needy men.

But it may be suspected that high marks mean easy studies. The many different lines of work cannot be equally severe, and it is said that those which call for least exertion will be sure to prove the favorites. As this charge of "soft" courses is the stock objection to the elective system, I shall be obliged to examine it somewhat minutely. Like most of the popular objections, it rests on an *a priori* assumption that thus things must be. Statistics all run the other way. Yet I am not surprised that people believe it. I believed it once myself when I knew nothing but prescribed systems. Under these, it certainly is true that ease is the main factor in making a study popular. Where choice is permitted, the factor of interest gets freer play, and exerts an influence that would not be anticipated by those who have never seen it in operation. Severe studies are often highly popular if the subject is at-

tractive and the teaching clear. Here is a list of the fifteen courses which in 1883-84 (the last year for which returns are complete) contained the largest numbers of seniors and juniors, those classes being at that time the only ones which had no prescribed studies: Mill's political economy, 125 seniors and juniors; European history from the middle of the eighteenth century, 102; history of ancient art, 80; comparative zoölogy, 58; political and constitutional history of the United States, 56; psychology, 52; geology, 47; constitutional government of England and the United States, 45; advanced geology, with field work, 43; Homer, sixteen books, 40; ethics, 38; logic, and introduction to philosophy, 38; Shakespeare, six plays, 37; economic history, advanced course, 36; legal history of England to the sixteenth century, 35. In these years the senior and junior classes together contained 404 men, who chose four electives apiece. In all, therefore, 1,616 choices were made. The above list shows 832; so that, as nearly as

may be, one half of the total work of two years is here represented. The other half was devoted to interests more special, which were pursued in smaller companies. Are these choices unwise? Are they not the studies which should largely occupy a young man's thoughts toward the close of his college life? They are the ones most frequently set for the senior and junior years by colleges which retain prescribed studies. From year to year choices differ a little. The courses at the lower end of the list may give place to others which do not appear here. I print the list simply to indicate the general character of the studies elected. In it appears only one out of all the modern languages, and that, too, a course in pure literature in which the marking is not reputed tender. Another year a course of French or German might come in; but ordinarily — except when chosen by specialists — the languages, modern and ancient, are elected most largely during the sophomore year. Fol-

lowing directly the prescribed linguistic studies of the freshman year, they are deservedly among the most popular, though not the easiest, courses. In nearly half the courses here shown no text-book is used, and the amount of reading necessary for getting an average mark is large. A shelf of books representing original authorities is reserved by the instructor at the Library, and the pupil is sent there to prepare his work.

How, it will be asked, are choices so judicious secured? Simply by making them deliberate. Last June studies were chosen for the coming year. During the previous month students were discussing with one another what their electives should be. How this or that course is conducted, what are the peculiarities of its teacher, what is the proportion in it between work given and gains had, are matters which then interest the inhabitants of Hollis and Holyoke as stocks interest Wall Street. Most students, too, have some

intimacy with one or another member of the Faculty, to whom they are in the habit of referring perplexities. This advice is now sought, and often discreetly rejected. The Elective Pamphlet is for a time the best-read book in college. The perplexing question is, What courses to give up? All find too many which they wish to take. The Pamphlet of this year offers 189 courses, divided among twenty departments. The five modern languages, for example, offer, all told, thirty-four different courses : Sanskrit, Persian, Assyrian, Hebrew, and Arabic, 14 ; Greek and Latin, 18 each ; natural history, 19 ; physics and chemistry, 18 ; mathematics, 18 ; history and philosophy, 12 each ; the fine arts, including music, 11 ; political economy, 7 ; Roman law, 2. These numbers will show the range of choice ; on its extent a great deal of the efficiency of the system depends.¹ After the electives are chosen

¹ But a great deal of the expense also. How much larger the staff of teachers must be where everything is

and reported in writing to the Dean, the long vacation begins, when plans of study come under the scrutiny of parents, of the parish minister, or of the college graduate who lives in the next street. Until September 21, any elective may be changed on notice sent to the Dean. During the first ten days of the term, no changes are allowed. This is a time of trial, when one sees for himself his chosen studies. Afterwards, for a short time, changes are easy, if the instructors consent. For the remainder of the year no change is possible, unless the reasons for change appear to the Dean important. Other restrictions on the freedom of choice will readily be understood without explanation. Advanced studies cannot be taken till preliminary ones are passed. Notices are published by the French and German departments

taught to anybody than where a few subjects are offered to all, may be seen by comparing the number of teachers at Harvard — 146, instructing 1,586 men — with those of Glasgow University in 1878 — 42, instructing 2,018 men.

that students who elect those languages must be placed where proficiency fits them to go. Courses especially technical in character are marked with a star in the Elective Pamphlet, and cannot be chosen till the instructor is consulted.

By means like these the Faculty try to prevent the wasting of time over unprofitable studies. Of course they do not succeed. I should roughly guess that a quarter, possibly a third, of the choices made might be improved. This estimate is based on the answers I have received to a question put to some fifty recent graduates: "In the light of your present experience, how many of your electives would you change?" I seldom find a man who would not change some; still more rarely one who would change one half. As I look back on my own college days, spent chiefly on prescribed studies, I see that to make these serve my needs more than half should have been different. There was Anglo-Saxon, for example,

which was required of all, no English literature being permitted. A course in advanced chemical physics, serviceable no doubt to some of my classmates, came upon me prematurely, and stirred so intense an aversion to physical study that subsequent years were troubled to overcome it. One meagre meal of philosophy was perhaps as much as most of us seniors could digest, but I went away hungry for more. I loved Greek, but for two years I was subject to the instructions of a certain professor, now dead, who was one of the most learned scholars and unprofitable teachers I ever knew. Of the studies which brought me benefit, few did so in any vigorous fashion. Every reader will parallel my experience from his own. Prescribed studies may be ill-judged or ill-adapted, ill-timed or ill-taught, but none the less inexorably they fall on just and unjust. The wastes of choice chiefly affect the shiftless and the dull, men who cannot be harmed much by being wasted.

The wastes of prescription ravage the energetic, the clear-sighted, the original, — the very classes who stand in greatest need of protection. What I would assert, therefore, is not that in the elective system we have discovered the secret of stopping educational waste. That will go on as long as men need teaching. I simply hold that the monstrous and peculiarly pernicious wastes of the old system are now being reduced to a minimum. Select your cloth discreetly, order the best tailor in town to make it up, and you will still require patience for many misfits; but they will be fewer, at any rate, than when garments are served out to you and the whole regiment by the government quartermaster.

Nobody who has taught both elective and prescribed studies need be told how the instruction in the two cases differs. With perfunctory students, a teacher is concerned with devices for forcing his pupils onward. Teaching becomes a sec-

ondary affair ; the time for it is exhausted
> in questioning possible shirks. Information must be elicited, not imparted. The text-book, with its fixed lessons, is a thing of consequence. It is the teacher's business to watch his pupils, to see that they carry off the requisite knowledge ;
> their business, then, it soon becomes to try to escape without it. Between teacher and scholar there goes on an ignoble game of matching wits, in which the teacher is smart if he can catch a boy, and the boy is smart if he can know nothing without being found out. Because of this supposed antagonism of interests American
> higher education seldom escapes an air of unreality. We seem to be at the opera bouffe. A boy appears at the learning-shop, purchases his parcel of knowledge, and then tries to toss it under the counter
> and dodge out of the door before the shopman can be quick enough to make him carry off the goods. Nothing can cure such folly except insistence that pupil's

neglect is not teacher's injury. The elective system points out to a man that he has something at stake in a study, and so trains him to look upon time squandered as a personal loss. Where this consciousness can be presumed, a higher style of teaching becomes possible. Methods spring up unlike formal lectures, unlike humdrum recitations. The student acquires — what he will need in after life — the power to look up a single subject in many books. Theses are written ; discussions held ; in higher courses, problems of research supersede defined tasks. During 1860-61, fifty-six per cent of the Harvard undergraduates consulted the college library ; during 1883-84, eighty-five per cent.

In a similar way governmental problems change their character. Formerly, it was assumed that a student who followed his own wishes would be indisposed to attend recitations. Penalties were accordingly established to compel him to come. At

present, there is not one of his twelve recitations a week which a Harvard student might not "cut." Of course I do not mean that unlimited absence is allowed. Any one who did not appear for a week would be asked what he was doing. But for several years there has been no mechanical regulation, — so much absence, so much penalty. I had the curiosity to see how largely, under this system of trust, the last senior class had cared to stay away. I counted all absences, excused and unexcused. Some men had been sick for considerable periods; some had been worthless, and had shamelessly abused their freedom. Reckoning in all misdeeds and all misfortunes, I found that on the average each man had been absent a little less than twice a week.¹ The test

¹ Or sixteen per cent of his recitations. Readers may like to compare this result with the number of absences elsewhere. At a prominent New England college, one of the best of those which require attendance, a student is excused from ten per cent of his exercises. But this amount does not cover absences of

of high character is the amount of freedom it will absorb without going to pieces. The elective system enlarges the capacity to absorb freedom undisturbed.

But it would be unfair to imply that the new spirit is awakened in students alone. Professors are themselves instructed. The obstacles to their proper work, those severest of all obstacles which come from defective sympathy, are cleared away. A teacher draws near his class, and learns what he can do for it. Long ago it was said that among the Gentiles — people spiritually rude — great ones exercised authority, while in a state of righteousness this should not be so; there the leader would estimate his importance by his serviceability. It was a teacher who spoke, and he spoke to teachers. To-day teachers' dangers lie in the same direction. Always

necessity, — absences caused by sickness, by needs of family, and by the many other perfectly legitimate hindrances to attendance. The percentage given for the Harvard seniors includes all absences whatsoever.

dealing with inferiors, isolated from criticism, by nature not less sluggish than others, through the honorable passion which they feel for their subject disposed to set the private investigation of it above its exposition, teachers are continually tempted to think of a class as if it existed for their sakes rather than they for its. Fasten pupils to the benches, and nothing counteracts this temptation except that individual conscience which in all of us is a faculty that will well bear strengthening. It may be just to condemn the dull, the intolerant, the self-absorbed teacher; but why not condemn also the system which perpetuates him? Nobody likes to be inefficient; slackness is largely a fault of inadvertence. That system is good which makes inadvertence difficult and opens the way for a teacher to discover whether his instructions hit. Give students choice, and a professor gets the power to see himself as others see him. How this is accomplished appears by examining three

possible cases. Suppose, in the first place, I become negligent this year, am busy with private affairs, and so content myself with imparting nothing, with calling off questions from a text-book, or with reading my old lectures ; I shall find out my mistake plainly enough next June, when fewer men than usual elect my courses. Suppose, secondly, I give my class important matter, but put it in such a form that young minds cannot readily assimilate it ; the same effect follows, only in this case I shall probably attract a small company of the hardier spirits, — in some subjects the very material a teacher desires. Or suppose, lastly, I seek popularity, aim at entertainment, and give my pupils little work to do ; my elective becomes a kind of sink, into which are drained off the intellectual dregs of the college. Other teachers will get rid of their loafers ; I shall take them in. But I am not likely to retain them. A teacher is known by the company he keeps. In a vigorous community a “ soft ”

elective brings no honor to its founder. I shall be apt to introduce a little stiffening into my courses each year, till the appearance of the proper grade of student tells me I am proved to have a value. There is, therefore, in the new method a self-regulating adjustment. Teacher and taught are put on their good behavior. A spirit of faithfulness is infused into both, and by that very fact the friendliest relation is established between them.

I have left myself little room to explain why the elective system should be begun as early as the freshman year, and surely not much room is needed. A system proved to exert a happy influence over character, and thence over manners and scholarly disposition, is exactly the maturing agency needed by the freshman of eighteen. It is the better suited to him because the early years of college life are its least valuable portion, which can bear, therefore, most economically the disciplining losses sure to come when a student is

learning to choose. More than this, the change from school-methods to character-methods is too grave a one to be passed over as an incident in the transition from year to year. A change of residence should mark it. It should stand at the entrance to a new career. Parents should be warned, and those who have brought up their sons to habits of luxurious ease should be made fully aware that a college which appeals to character has no place for children of theirs. Every mode of training has its exclusions. I prefer the one which brings least profit to our dangerous classes—the indolent rich. Leslie Stephen has said that the only argument rascals can understand is the hangman. The only inducement to study, for boys of loose early life, is compulsion. But for the plain democratic many, who have sound seed in themselves, who have known duty early, and who have found in worthy things their law and impulse, the elective system, even during the freshman year,

gives an opportunity for moral and mental expansion such as no compulsory system can afford.

Perhaps in closing I ought to caution the reader that he has been listening to a description of tendencies merely, and not of completed attainment. In no college is the New Education fully embodied. It is an ideal, toward which all are moving, and a powerfully influential ideal. In explaining it, for the sake of simplicity I have confined myself to tracing the working of its central principle, and I have drawn my illustrations from that Harvard life with which I am most familiar. But simplicity distorts; the shadows disappear. I am afraid I may seem to have hinted that the Harvard training already comes pretty near perfection. It does not—let me say so distinctly. We have much to learn. Side by side with the nobler tendencies to which I have directed attention, disheartening things appear. The examination

paper still attacks learning on its intellectual side, the marking system on its moral. All I have sought to establish is this: there is a method which we and many other colleges in different degrees have adopted, which is demonstrably a sound method. Its soundness should by this time be generally acknowledged, and criticism should now turn to the important work of bettering its details of operation. May what I have written encourage such criticism and help to, make it wise, penetrative, and friendly.





POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE ELECTIVE SYSTEM.

I.

IN a paper published in the "Andover Review" of November, 1885, I called attention to the fact that a new principle is at work in American education. That principle, briefly stated, is this : the student now consciously shares in his own upbuilding. His studies are knitted closely to his personal life. Under this influence a new species of power is developed. Scholarship broadens and deepens, boyishness diminishes, teacher and pupil meet less artificially. The college, as an institution, wins fresh life. Public confidence awakens ; pupils, benefactions, flow in. Over what I wrote an eager controversy has arisen, a controversy which must have proved

instructive to those who need instruction most. In the last resort questions of education are decided by educators, as those of sanitation by sanitary engineers ; but in both cases the decision has reference to public needs, and people require to be instructed in the working of appliances which are designed for their comfort. There is danger that such instruction may not be given. Professional men become absorbed in their art and content themselves with reticence, leaving the public ignorant of the devices by which its health is to be preserved. A great opportunity, therefore, comes to the common householder when these professional men fall foul of one another. In pressing arguments home they frequently take to ordinary speech, and anybody who then lends an ear learns of the mysteries. The present discussion, I am sure, has brought this informatory gain to every parent who reads the "Andover Review" and has a studious boy. The gain will have been greater because of the

candor and courtesy with which the attacking party has delivered its assault. The contest has been earnest. Its issues have been rightly judged momentous. For good or for ill, the choice youth of the land are to be shaped by whatever educational policy finally wins. Yet, so far as I recall, no unkind word has slipped from the pen of one of my stout opponents ; no disparagement of man or college has mixed with the energetic advocacy of principle. The discussion has set in well toward things. I cannot call this remarkable. Of course it is not easy to be fair and strong at once. Sweetness and light are often parted. Yet we rightly expect the scholar's life to civilize him who pursues it, and we anticipate from books a refinement of the spirit and the manners as well as the understanding. My opponents have been scholars, and have spoken as scholars speak. It is a pleasure to linger in their kindly contentious company. So I gladly accept the invitation of the editors of the "Review" to sum up our

discussion and to add some explanatory last words.

The papers which have appeared fall into two easily distinguishable classes, the descriptive and the critical. To the former I devote but a brief space, so much more direct is the bearing of the latter on the main topic of debate, the question, namely, what course the higher education can and what it cannot now take. Yet the descriptive papers perform a service and deserve a welcome word. Suspecting that I was showing off Harvard rather favorably, professors planted elsewhere have attempted to make an equally favorable exhibit of their own colleges. In my manifesto they have seen "a coveted opportunity to bring forward corresponding statistics which have not been formed under the Harvard method." Perhaps this was to mistake my aim a little. I did intend to advance my college in public esteem; she deserves that of me in everything I write. But primarily I thought of myself as the expounder of an

important policy, which happens to have been longer perceived and more elaborately studied at Harvard than elsewhere. I hope I did not imply that Harvard, having this excellence, has all others. She has many weaknesses, which should not be shielded from discerning discussion. Nor did I intend to commit the injustice to Harvard — an injustice as gross as it is frequent — of treating her as a mere embodiment of the elective system. Harvard is a complex and august institution, possessed of all the attractions which can be lent by age, tradition, learning, continually renewed resources, fortunate situation, widespread clientage, enthusiastic loyalty, and forceful guidance. She is the intellectual mother of us all, honored certainly by me, and I believe by thousands of others, for a multiplicity of subtle influences which stretch far outside her special modes of instruction. But for the last half century Harvard has been developing a new and important policy of education. Coincident with this

development she has attained enormous popular esteem and internal power. The value and limits of this policy, the sources of this esteem and power, I wish everybody, colleges and populace, to scrutinize. To make these things understood is to help the higher education everywhere.

In undertaking this *quasi* philosophical task, I count it a piece of good fortune to have provoked so many lucid accounts of what other colleges are doing. The more of these the better. The public cannot be too persistently reminded of the distinctive merits of this college and of that. Let each be as zealous as possible ; gains made by one are gains for all. Depreciatory rivalry between colleges is as silly as it is when religious sects quarrel in the midst of a perishing world. Probably such rivalries have their rise in the dull supposition that a fixed constituency of pupils exists somewhere, which if not turned toward one college may be drawn to another. As the old political economists tell of a "wages

fund," fixed and constant in each community, so college governors are apt to imagine a public pupil-hoard, not susceptible of much increase or diminution, which may by inadvertence fall into other hands than their own. In reality each college creates its constituency. Its students come, in the main, from the inert mass of the uncollegiate public. Only one in eight among Harvard students is a son of a Harvard graduate; and probably the small colleges beget afresh an even larger percentage of their students. On this account the small colleges have been a power in the land. To disparage them shall never be my office. In a larger degree than the great universities they spread the college idea among people who would not otherwise possess it. The boy who lives within fifty miles of one of them reflects whether he will or will not have a college training. Were there no college in the neighborhood, he might never consider the matter at all. It is natural enough for

undergraduates to decry every college except their own; but those who love education generously, and who seek to spread it far and wide, cannot afford the luxury of envy. One common danger besetting us all should bind us together. In the allurements of commerce boys may forget that college is calling. They do forget it. According to my computations the number of persons in the New England colleges to-day is about the same as the number in the insane asylums; but little more than the number of idiots. Probably this number is not increasing in proportion to population. Professor Newton, of Oberlin, finds that the increase of students during the ten years between 1870 and 1880, in twenty of our oldest leading colleges, was less than three and a half per cent, the population of the United States increasing during the same period twenty-three per cent. In view of facts like these, careful study of the line along which college growth is still possible becomes a neces-

sity. It will benefit all colleges alike. No one engaged in it has a side to maintain. We are all alike seekers. Whatever instructive experience any college can contribute to the common study, and whatever pupils she may thereby gain, will be matter for general rejoicing.

To such a study the second, or critical, class of papers furnish important stimulus; for these have not confined themselves to describing institutions: they have gone on to discuss the value and limits of the principle which actuates the new education everywhere. In many respects their writers and I are in full accord. In moral aim we always are, and generally, too, in our estimate of the present status. We all confess that the conditions of college education have changed, that the field of knowledge has enlarged, that a liberal training nowadays must fit men for more than the four professions of preaching, teaching, medicine, and law. We agree that the prescribed systems of the past are

outgrown. We do not want them. We doubt whether they were well suited to their own time; we are sure they will never fit ours. Readjustment of curricula, we all declare, must be undertaken if the higher education is to retain its hold on our people. Further still, we agree in the direction of this readjustment. My critics, no less than I, believe that a widely extended scope must be given to individual choice. With the possible exception of Professor Denison, about whose opinion I am uncertain, everybody who has taken part in the controversy recognizes the elective principle as a beneficial one and maintains that in some form or other it has come to stay. People generally are not aware what a consensus of opinion on this point late years have brought about. To rid ourselves once for all of further controversy let us weigh well the words of my opponents.

Mr. Brearley begins his criticism addressed to the New York Harvard Club

thus : "We premise that every one accepts the elective principle. Some system based on that principle must be established. No one wants the old required systems back, or any new required system." Professor Howison says : "An elective system, in its proper place, and under its due conditions, is demonstrably sound." Professor Ladd does not express himself very fully on this point in the "Andover Review," but his opinions may be learned from the "New Englander" for January, 1885. When, in 1884, Yale College reformed its curriculum and introduced elective studies, it became desirable to instruct the graduates about the reasons for a step which had been long resisted. After a brief trial of the new system, Professor Ladd published his impressions of it. I strongly commend his candid paper to the attention of those who still believe the old methods the safer. He asserts that "a perfect and final course of college study is, if not an unattainable ideal, at present an

impossible achievement." The considerations which were "the definite and almost compulsory reasons for instituting a comprehensive change" he groups under the following heads: (1) the need of modern languages; (2) the crowding of studies in the senior year; (3) the heterogeneous and planless character of the total course; (4) the need of making allowance for the tastes, the contemplated pursuits, and the aptitudes of the individual student. Substantially, these are the evils of prescription which I pointed out; only, in my view, they are evils not confined to a single year. Stating his observation of the results of election, Professor Ladd says: "Increased willingness in study, and even a new and marked enthusiasm on the part of a considerable number of students, is another effect of the new course already realized. The entire body of students in the upper classes is more attentive, regular, interested, and even eager, than ever before." "More intimate and effective rela-

tions are secured in many cases between teachers and pupils."

These convictions in regard to the efficiency which the elective principle lends to education are not confined to my critics and myself. Let me cite testimony from representatives of other colleges. The last Amherst Catalogue records (page 24) that "excellent results have appeared from this [the elective] method. The special wants of the student are thus met, his zest and progress in his work are increased, and his association with his teachers becomes thus more close and intimate." President Robinson says, in his annual report for 1885 to the Corporation of Brown University: "There are advantages in a carefully guarded system of optional studies not otherwise obtainable. The saving of time in preparing for a special calling in life is something, and the cumulative zeal in given lines of study, where a gratified and growing taste is ever beckoning onward, is still more. But above all, some

provision for choice among ever-multiplying courses of study has become a necessity." In addressing the American Institute of Instruction at Bar Harbor, July 7, 1886, Professor A. S. Hardy, of Dartmouth, is reported as saying: "Every educator now recognizes the fact that individual characteristics are always sufficiently marked to demand his earliest attention; and, furthermore, that there is a stage in the process of education where the choice, the responsibility, and the freedom of the individual should have a wide scope." President Adams, in his inaugural address at Cornell in 1885, asserted that "there are varieties of gifts, call them, if you will, fundamental differences, that make it impossible to train successfully all of a group of boys to the same standard. These differences are partly matters of sheer ability, and partly matters of taste; for if a boy has so great an aversion to a given study that he can never be brought to apply himself to it with some measure

of fondness, he is as sure not to succeed in it as he would be if he were lacking the requisite mental capacity.”¹

In determining, then, what the new education may wisely be, let this be considered settled: it must contain a large element of election. That is the opinion

¹ These conditions of intellectual nourishment were long ago recognized in other, less formal, departments of mental training. In his essays on “Books and Reading” President Porter wrote in 1871: “The person who asks, What shall I read? or, With what shall I begin? may have read for years in a mechanical routine, and with a listless spirit; with scarcely an independent thought, with no plans of self-improvement, and few aspirations for self-culture. To all these classes the advice is full of meaning: ‘Read what will satisfy your wants and appease your desires, and you will comply with the first condition to reading with interest and profit.’ Hunger and thirst are better than manifold appliances and directions, in respect to other than the bodily wants, towards a good appetite and a healthy digestion. If a man has any self-knowledge or any power of self-direction, he is surely competent to ask himself what is the subject or subjects in respect to which he stands most in need of knowledge or excitement from books. If he can answer this question, he has gone very far towards answering the question, ‘What book or books can I read with satisfaction and profit?’” (Ch. iv., p. 39.)

of these unbiased judges. They find personal choice necessary for promoting a wider range of topics in the college, a greater zeal on the part of the student, and more suitable relations between teacher and pupil. With this judgment I, of course, heartily agree, though I should make more prominent the moral reason of the facts. I should insist that a right character and temper in the receiving mind is always a prerequisite of worthy study. But I misrepresent these gentlemen if I allow their testimony to stop here. They maintain that the elective principle as thus far carried out, though valuable, is still meagre and one-sided. They do not think it will be found self-sufficing and capable of guarding its own working. They see that it has dangers peculiar to itself, and believe that to escape them it will require to be restricted and furnished with supplemental influences. I believe so too. Choice is important, but it is also important that one should choose well. The

- > individual is sacred, but only so far as he is capable of recognizing the sacredness of laws which he has had no part in making.
- > Unrestricted arbitrary choice is indistinguishable from chaos ; and undoubtedly every method of training which avoids mechanism and includes choice as a factor leaves a door open in the direction of chaos. Infinite Wisdom left that door open when man was created. To dangers from this source I am fully alive. I totally dissent from those advocates of the elective system who would identify it with a *laissez-faire* policy. The cry that we must let nature take care of itself is a familiar one in trade, in art, in medicine, in social relations, in the religious life, in education ; but in the long run it always proves inadequate. Man is a personal spirit, a director, a being fitted to compare and to organize forces, not to take them as they rise, like a creature of nature. The future will certainly not tolerate an education less organic than that of the past ; but just as

certainly will it demand that the organic tie shall be a living one, — one whose bond may assist those whom it restricts to become spontaneous, forcible, and diverse. If I am offered 'only the alternative of absolutism or *laissez-faire*, I choose *laissez-faire*. Out of chaotic nature beautiful forms do continually come forth. But absolutism kills in the cradle. It cannot tolerate a life that is imperfect, and so it stifles what it should nourish.

Up to this point my critics and I have walked hand in hand. Henceforth we part company. I shall not follow out all our little divergences. My object from the first has been to trace the line along which education may now proceed. It must, it seems, be a line including election; but election limited how? To disentangle an answer to this vexed question, I pass by the many points in which my critics have shown that I am foolish, and the few others in which I might show them so, and turn to the fundamental issue between

us, our judgment of what the supplemental influences are which will render personal initiative safe. Personal initiative is assured. The authoritative utterances I have just quoted show that it can never again be expelled from American colleges. But what checks are compatible with it? Accepting choice, what treatment will render it continually wiser? Here differences of judgment begin to appear, and here I had hoped to receive light from my critics. The question is one where co-operative experience is essential. But those who have written against me seem hardly to have realized its importance. They generally confine themselves to showing how bad my plans are, and merely hint at better ones which they themselves might offer. But what are these plans? Wise ways of training boys are of more consequence than Harvard misdeeds. We want to hear of a constructive policy which can take a young man of nineteen and so train him in self-direction that four years later he may

venture out alone into a perplexing, and for the most part hostile, world. The thing to be done is to teach boys how to manage themselves. Admit that the Harvard discipline does not do this perfectly at present ; what will do it better ? Here we are at an educational crisis. We stand with this aim of self-guidance in our hands. What are we going to do with it ? It is as dangerous as a bomb. But we cannot drop it. It is too late to oburgate. It is better to think calmly what possible modes of treatment are still open. When railroads were found dangerous, men did not take to stage-coaches again ; they only studied railroading the more.

Now in the mass of negative criticism which the last year has produced I detect three positive suggestions, three ways in which it is thought limitation may be usefully applied to supplement the inevitable personal initiative. These modes of limitation, it is true, are not worked out with any fulness of practical detail, as if their

advocates were convinced that the future was with them. Rather they are thrown out as hints of what might be desirable if facts and the public would not interfere. But as they seem to be the only conceivable modes of restricting the elective principle by any species of outside checkage, I propose to devote the remainder of this paper to an examination of their feasibility. In a subsequent paper I shall indicate what sort of corrective appears to me more likely to prove congruous and lasting.

The first suggestion is that the elective principle should be limited from beneath. Universities and schools are to advance their grade, so that finally the universities will secure three or four years of purely elective study, while the schools, in addition to their present labors, will take charge of the studies formerly prescribed by the college. The schools, in short, are to become German Gymnasias, and the colleges to delay becoming universities until this regeneration of the schools is accom-

plished.¹ A certain "sum of topics" is said to be essential to the culture of the man and the citizen. In the interest of church and state, young minds must be provided with certain "fact forms," with a "common consciousness," a "common

¹ In deference to certain writers I employ their favorite term "university" in contrast with the term "college," yet I must own I do not know what it means. An old signification is clear. A university is an assemblage of schools, as our government is an assemblage of States. In England, different corporations, giving substantially similar instruction, are brought together by a common body which confers the degrees. In this country, a group of professional schools—law, medicine, theology, and science—are associated through one governing body with the college proper, that is, with the candidates for the B. A. degree. In this useful sense, Tufts and Bowdoin are universities; Amherst and Brown, colleges. But Germany, which has thrown so many parts of the world into confusion, has introduced exaltation and mystery here. A university now appears to mean "a college as good as it can be," a stimulating conception, but not a finished or precise one. I would not disparage it. It is a term of aspiration, good to conjure with. When we want to elevate men's ideas, or to obtain their dollars, it is well to talk about creating a true university: just as it is wise to bid the forward-reaching boy to become "a true gentleman."

basis of humanism." Important as personal election is, to allow it to take place before this common basis is laid is "to strike a blow at the historic substance of civilization." How extensive this common consciousness is to be may be learned from Professor Howison's remark that "languages, classical and modern ; mathematics, in all its general conceptions, thoroughly apprehended ; physics, acquired in a similar manner, and the other natural sciences, though with much less of detail ; history and politics ; literature, especially of the mother tongue, but, indispensably, the masterpieces in other languages, particularly the classic ; philosophy, in the thorough elements of psychology, logic, metaphysics, and ethics, each historically treated, and economics, in the history of elementary principles, must all enter into any education that can claim to be liberal."

The practical objections to this monarchical scheme are many. I call attention to three only.

In the first place, the argument on which it is based proves too much. If we suppose a common consciousness to be a matter of such importance, and that it cannot be secured except by sameness of studies, then that State is criminally careless which allows ninety-nine hundredths of its members to get an individual consciousness by the simple expedient of never entering college. The theory seems to demand that every male—and why not female?—between sixteen and twenty be indoctrinated in “the essential subject matters,” without regard to what he or she may personally need to know or do. This is the plan of religious teaching adopted by the Romish Church, which enforces its “fact forms” of doctrine on all alike; without securing, however, by this means, according to the judgment of the outside world, any special freshness of religious life. I do not believe the results would be better in the higher secular culture, and I should be sorry to see

Romish methods applied there ; but if they are to be applied, let them fall impartially on all members of the community. To put into swaddling clothes the man who is wise enough to seek an education, and to leave his duller brother to kick about as he pleases, seems a little arbitrary.

But secondly, there is no more prospect of persuading our high schools to accept the prescribed subjects of the colleges than there is of persuading our government to transform itself into the German. Already the high schools and the colleges are unhappily drawing apart. The only hope of their nearer approach is in the remission by the colleges of some of the more burdensome subjects at present exacted. Paid for by common taxation, these schools are called on to equip the common man for his daily struggle. That they will one day devote themselves to laying the foundations of an ideally best education for men of leisure is grôtesquely

improbable. Although Harvard draws rather more than one third of her students from States outside New England, the whole number of students who have come to her from the high schools of these States, during a period of the last ten years, is but sixty-six. Fitting for college is becoming an alarmingly technical matter, and is falling largely into the hands of private tutors and academies.

It may be said, however, thirdly, that it is just these academies which might advantageously take the present freshman and sophomore studies. They would thus become the exclusive avenues to the university of the future, leaving it free to do its own proper work with elective studies. Considering the great expense which this lengthening of the curriculum of the academy implies, it is plain that the number of schools capable of fitting boys in this way would always be small. These few academies, with their monopoly of learned

training, would lose their present character and be erected into little colleges, — colleges of a second grade. That any such thing is likely to occur, I do not believe ; but if it were, would it aid the higher education and promote its wide dispersion ? Precisely the contrary. Instead of going to the university from these academies, boys would content themselves with the tolerable education already received. For the most part they would decline to go farther. It is useless to say that this does not happen in Germany, where the numbers resorting to the university are so large as to have become the subject of complaint ; for the German government, controlling as it does all access to the professions, is able to force through the Gymnasia and through special courses at the university a body of young men who would otherwise be seeking their fortunes elsewhere. Whether such control would be desirable in this country, I will not consider. Some questions are not feasi-

ble even for discussion. But it is to English experience we must look to see what our case would be. The great public schools of England — Eton, Rugby, Harrow, Winchester, Westminster, Cheltenham — are of no higher order than under the proposed plan Andover and Exeter would become. From these two academies nearly ninety-five per cent of the senior classes now enter some college. But of the young men graduating from the English schools named, so far as I can ascertain, less than fifty per cent go to the university. With the greater pressure toward commercial life in this country, the number would certainly be less than in England. To build up colleges of a second grade, and to permit none but those who have passed them to enter colleges of the first, is to cut off the higher education from nearly all those who do not belong to the privileged classes ; it is to make the "common consciousness" less common, and to turn it, even more effectually

ally than at present, into the consciousness of a clique. He who must make a living for himself or for others cannot afford to reach his profession late. The age of entering college is already too high. With improved methods of teaching I hope it may be somewhat reduced. At any rate, every study now added to the high schools or academies is a fresh barrier between education and the people.

If, then, by prescribing a large amount of study outside the university the elective principle is not likely to be successfully limited, is it not probable that within the college itself the two counter principles of election and prescription, mutually limiting, mutually supporting, will always be retained? This is the second suggestion; to bring studies of choice and studies commanded into juxtaposition. The backbone of the college is to be kept prescribed, the fleshy parts to be made elective. By a special modification of the plan, the later years are turned

largely, perhaps wholly, toward election, and a line is drawn at the junior, or even the sophomore year, below which elective studies are forbidden to penetrate. Is not this the plan that will finally be judged safest? It certainly is the safest for a certain number of years. Before it can securely reach anything else, every college must pass through this intermediate state. After half a century of testing election, Harvard still retains some prescribed studies. The Harvard juniors chose for nineteen years before the sophomores, and the sophomores seventeen years before the freshmen. In introducing electives a sober pace is commendable. A university is charged with the greatest of public trusts. The intelligence of the community is, to a large extent, in its keeping. It is bound to keep away from risky experiments, to disregard shifting popular fancies, and to be as conservative as clearness of sight will permit. I do not plead, therefore, that Harvard and

Yale should abolish all prescription the coming year. They certainly should not. In my opinion, most colleges are moving too fast in the elective direction already. I merely plead that we must see where we are going. As public guides, we must forecast the track of the future if we would avoid stumbling into paths which lead nowhere. That is all I am attempting here. I want to ascertain whether the dual system of limitation is a stable system, one in which we can put our trust, or whether it is a temporary convenience, likely to slip away a little year after year. What does history say? Let us examine the facts of the past. The following table shows at the left the fifteen New England colleges. In the next three parallel columns is printed the percentage of elective studies which existed in these colleges in 1875-76; in the last three, the percentage which exists to-day. To render the comparison more exact, I print the sophomore, junior, and senior years separately, reserv-

ing the problem of the freshman year for later discussion.¹

	1875-76.			1885-86.		
	Soph.	Jun.	Sen.	Soph.	Jun.	Sen.
Amherst. . .	.04	.20	.08	.20	.75	.75
Bates . . .	0	0	0	0	0	0
Boston . . .	0	0	0	.35	.66	.82
Bowdoin. . .	0	0	0	.15	.25	.25
Brown . . .	0	.04	.04	.14	.37	.55
Colby. . . .	0	0	0	0	.08	.16
Dartmouth .	0	0	0	0	.41	.36
Harvard. . .	.50	.78	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Middlebury	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trinity . . .	0	0	0	0	.25	.25
Tufts	0	.17	.17	0	.28	.43
Vermont. . .	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wesleyan . .	0	.47	.47	.16	.47	.64
Williams . .	0	0	0	0	0	.37
Yale	0	0	0	.13	.53	.80

This table yields four conclusions: (1) A rapid and fateful revolution is going on in

¹ It is impossible to show in this table the range of choice, that is, the number of studies between which a man's selection lies. I wish I could warrant minute accuracy in regard to the point which it professes to show. Great pains have been spent upon it. Its statements have been reported to me by an officer of the college named, and this report has been subsequently verified by catalogue. But only those who have had much experience with statistics know how unveracious figures can be.

the higher education of New England. We do not exaggerate the change when we speak of an old education and a new.

(2) The spread of it is in tolerable proportion to the wealth of the college concerned.

> The new modes are expensive. It is not disapproval which is holding the colleges back ; it is inability to meet the cost. I am sorry to point out this fact. To my mind one of the gravest perplexities of the new education is the query, What are the small colleges to do ? They have a usefulness altogether peculiar ; yet from the life-giving modern methods of training they are of necessity largely cut off. (3) The colleges which long ago foresaw their coming necessities have been able to proceed more cautiously than those which acknowledged them late. (4) The movement is one of steady advance. There is no going back. It must be remembered, too, that the stablest colleges have been proceeding with these changes many more years than the period shown in the table. Are we,

then, prepared to dismiss prejudice from our minds and to recognize what steadiness of advance means? In other matters when a general tendency in a given direction is discovered, extending over a long series of years, visible in individuals widely unlike, and presenting no solitary case of backward turning, we are apt to conclude that there is a force in the movement which will carry it still further onward. We are not disposed to seize on some point in its path and to count that an ultimate holding-ground. This, I say, would be a natural conclusion unless we could detect in the movement tendencies at work in an opposite direction. Are there any such tendencies here? I cannot find them. Prescription invariably loses; election invariably gains.

But in order to make a rational prediction about the future we must know more than the bare facts of the past; we need to know why these particular facts have arisen. What are the reasons that when-

ever elective and prescribed studies are mixed, an extrusive force regularly appears in the elective? The reasons are not far to seek. Probably every professor in New England understands them. The two systems are so incongruous that each brings out the vices rather than the virtues of its incompatible brother. Prescribed studies, side by side with elective, appear a bondage ; elective, side by side with prescribed, an indulgence. So long as all studies are prescribed, one may be set above another in the mind of the pupil on grounds of intrinsic worth ; let certain studies express the pupil's wishes, and almost certainly the remainder, valuable as they may be in themselves, will express his disesteem. It is useless to say this should not be so. It always is. The zeal of work, the freshness of interest, which now appear in the chosen studies, are deducted from those which are forced. On the latter as little labor as possible is expended. They become perfunctory and mechanical, and soon restive

pupils and dissatisfied teachers call for fresh extension of energizing choice. This is why the younger officers in all the colleges are eager to give increased scope to the elective studies. They cannot any longer get first-rate work done in the prescribed. Alarmed by the dangers of the new principle, as they often and justly are, they find that the presence of prescription, instead of diminishing the dangers, adds another and a peculiarly enfeebling one to those which existed before. So certain are these dangers, and so inevitable the expanding power of the elective principle, that it is questionable whether it would not be wise for a college to refuse to have anything to do with elective studies so soon as it knows itself too weak to allow them to spread.

For where will this spreading stop? It cannot stop till the causes of it stop. The table just given shows no likelihood of its stopping at all, and a little reflection will show that each enlargement increases the

reasons for another enlargement still. If prescribed studies are ever exceptional, ineffective, and obnoxious, they certainly become more so as they diminish in number. A college which retains one of them is in a condition of unstable equilibrium. But is this true of the freshman year? Will not a special class of considerations keep prescription enduring and influential there, long after it has lost its usefulness in the later years? A boy of nineteen comes from home about as untrained in will as in intelligence. Will it not always be thought best to give him a year in which to acquaint himself with his surroundings and to learn what studies he may afterwards profitably select? Possibly it will. I incline to think not. The case of the freshman year is undoubtedly peculiar. Taking a large body of colleges, we have direct evidence that during their last three years the elective principle steadily wins and never loses. We have but a trifle of such evidence as regards the freshman year. There the

struggle of the two forces has barely begun. It has begun at Harvard, and the usual result is already foreshadowed. The prescribed studies are disparaged studies; they are not worked at the best advantage. Still, I do not like to prophesy on evidence so narrow. I will merely say I see no reason to suppose that colleges will meet with permanent success in mingling incompatible kinds of study in their freshman year. But I can only surmise. Let any college that inclines to try the experiment do so.

It may be thought, however, a wiser course to keep the freshman year untouched by choice. A solid year of prescription is thus secured as a limitation on the election that is to follow. This plan is so often advised, especially by persons unacquainted with the practical working of colleges, that it requires a brief examination by itself.

Let us suppose the revolution which we have traced in the sophomore, junior, and senior years to have reached its natural ter-

minus ; let us suppose that in these years all studies have become elective, while the freshman year remains completely prescribed ; the college will then fall into two parts, a preparatory department and a university department. In these two departments the character of the instruction, the methods of study, the consciousness of the students, will be altogether dissimilar. The freshmen will not be taken by upper classmen as companions ; they will be looked down upon as children. Hazing will find abundant excuse. An abrupt line will be drawn, on whose farther side freedom will lie, on whose hither side, bondage. The sophomore, a being who at best has his peculiarities, will find his sense of self-sufficiency doubled. Whatever badly-bred boy parents incline to send to college will seem to them safe enough for a year, and they will suppose that during this period he will learn how to behave. Of course he will learn nothing of the sort. Manly discipline has not yet begun. At

the end of the freshman year a boy will be only so much less a boy as increase of age may make him. Through being forced to study mathematics this year there comes no sustaining influence fitted to fortify the judgment when one is called the next year to choose between Greek and German. On the contrary, the change from school methods to maturing methods is rendered as dangerous as possible by allowing it to take place quite nakedly, by itself, unsupported by other changes, and at the mere dictation of the almanac. An emancipation so bare and sudden is not usual elsewhere. For boys who do not go to college, departure from home is commonly recognized as a fit occasion for putting on that dangerous garment, the *toga virilis*. Entrance to the university constitutes a similar epoch, when change of residence, new companions, altered conditions of living, a realization that the old supports are gone, and the presumption with which every one now meets the youth that he is to be

treated as a man among men, become helpful influences co-operating to ease the hard and inevitable transition from parental control to personal self-direction. A safer time for beginning individual responsibility cannot be found. At any rate, whether my diagnosis of reasons is correct or not, the fact is clear, — self-respecting colleges do not tolerate preparatory departments. They do not work well. They are an element of weakness in the institution which harbors them. Even where at first they are judged necessary, so soon as the college grows strong they are dropped. When we attempt to plan an education for times to come, we must bear in mind established facts. Turn the freshman year into a preparatory department, fill it with studies antithetic in aim, method, and spirit to those of later years, and something is established which no sober college ever permitted to remain long within its borders. This is the teaching of the past without an exception. To suppose the future will be dif-

ferent is but the blind hope of a timid transitionalism.

The third suggestion for restricting election is the group system. This deserves a more respectful treatment than the methods hitherto discussed, for it is something more than a suggestion: it is a system, a constructive plan of education, thought out in all its parts, and directed toward an intended end. The definition which I have elsewhere offered of the elective system, that it demands a fixed quantity and quality of study with variable topic, would be applicable also to the group system. Accordingly it belongs to the new education rather than to the old. No less than the elective system it is opposed to the methods of restriction thus far described. These latter methods attempt to limit election by the ballast of an alien principle lodged beneath it or by its side. They put a weight of prescription into the preparatory schools, into the early college years, or into parallel lines of study extending throughout the

college course. The source of their practical trouble lies here : the two principles, election and prescription, are nowhere united ; they remain sundered and at war, unserviceable for each other's defects. The group system intertwines them. It permits choice in everything, but at the same time prescribes everything. This it effects by enlarging the unit of choice and prescribing its constituent factors. A group or block of studies is offered for choice, not a single study. All the studies of a group must be taken if any are, the "if" being the only matter left for the student to settle. The group may include all the studies open to a student at the university. One decision may determine his entire course. Or, as in the somewhat analogous arrangement of the English universities, one group may be selected at the beginning and another in the middle of the university life. The group itself is sometimes contrived so as to allow an individual variation ; different students read different

books ; a special phase of philosophy, history, or science receives prominence. But the boundaries of the group cannot be crossed. All the studies selected by the college authorities to form a single group must be taken ; no others can be.

In this method of limiting choice there is much that is attractive. I feel that attraction strongly. Under the exceptional conditions which exist at the Johns Hopkins University, a group system has done excellent work. Like all the rest of the world, I honor that work and admire its wise directors. But group systems seem to me to possess features too objectionable to permit them to become the prevalent type of the future, and I do not see how these features can be removed without abandoning what is distinctive, and changing the whole plan into the elective system, pure and simple. The objectionable features connect themselves with the size of the unit of choice, with difficulties in the construction of the groups, and with the

attempt to enforce specialization. But these are enigmatic phrases; let me explain them.

Obviously, for the young, foresight is a hard matter. While disciplining them in the intricate art of looking ahead, I should think it wise to furnish frequently a means of repairing errors. Penalties for bad choices should not be too severe. Now plainly the larger the unit of choice, the graver the consequences of erroneous judgment. The group system takes a large unit, a body of studies; the simple elective system, a small unit, the single study. Errors of choice are consequently less reparable under the group system than under pure election. To meet this difficulty the college course at Baltimore has been reduced from four years to three; but even so, a student who selects a group for which he finds himself unfit cannot bring himself into proper adjustment without the loss of a year. If he does not discover his unfitness until the second year

has begun, he loses two years. Under the elective system, the largest possible penalty for a single mistake is the loss of a single study, one quarter of a year's work. This necessary difference in ease of reparability appears to me to mark an inferiority in group systems, considered as methods of educating choice. To the public it may seem otherwise. I am often astonished to find people approving irreparable choices and condemning reparable ones. That youths between nineteen and twenty-three should select studies for themselves shocks many people who look kindly enough on marriages contracted during those years. Boys still unbearded have a large share in deciding whether they will go to college, to a scientific school, to a store, to sea, or to a cattle-ranch. Their lives are staked on the wisdom of the step taken. Yet the American mode of meeting these family problems seems to our community, on the whole, safer than the English way of reg-

ulating them by tradition and dictation. The choice with heavy stakes of the boy who does not go to college is frequently set off favorably against the choices with light stakes of the boy who goes. Perhaps a similarly lenient judgment will in the long run be passed on the great stakes involved in group systems. I doubt it. I think it will ultimately be judged less dangerous and more maturing to grant a young man, in his passage through a period of moral discipline, frequent opportunities of repair.

Again, the practical difficulties of deciding what groups shall be formed are enormous. What studies shall enter into each? How many groups shall there be? If but one, we have the old-fashioned college with no election. If two, we have the plan which Yale has just abandoned, a fixed undergraduate department maintained in parallel vigor with a fixed scientific school. But in conceding the claims of variety even to this degree, we have

treated the fundamental differences between man and man as worthy, not reprehensible; and can we say that the proper differences are only two? Must we not acknowledge a world at least as complex as that they have in Baltimore, where there appear to be seven reputable species of mankind: "Those who wish a good classical training; those who look toward a course in medicine; those who prefer mathematical studies with reference to engineering, astronomy, and teaching; those who wish an education in scientific studies, not having chosen a specialty; those who expect to pursue a course in theology; those who propose to study law; those who wish a literary training not rigidly classical."¹ Here a classification of human wishes is attempted, but one suspects that there are legitimate wishes which lie outside the scheme. It does not, for example, at once appear why a prospective chemist should be debarred from

¹ Andover Review, June, 1886, p. 572.

all regular study of mathematics. It seems hard that a youth of literary tastes should be cut off from Greek at entrance unless he will agree to take five exercises in it each week throughout his college course. One does not feel quite easy in allowing nobody but a lawyer or a devotee of modern languages to read a page of English or American history.¹ The Johns Hopkins programme is the most ingenious and the most flexible contrivance for working a group system that I have ever seen. For this reason I mention it as the most favorable type of all. Considering its purposes, I do not believe it can be much improved. As applied to its little band of students — 116 — it certainly works few hardships. Yet all the exclusions I have named, and many more besides, appear in it. I instance these simply to show what barriers to knowledge the best group system erects. Remove these, and others quite as great

¹ See the Johns Hopkins University Register, pp. 47-53.

are introduced. Try to avoid them by allowing the student of one group to take certain studies in another, and the sole line which parts the group system from the elective is abandoned. In practice, it usually is abandoned. Confronted with the exigencies of operation, the so-called group system turns into an elective system, with highly specialized lines of study strongly recommended. With this more genial working I have nothing now to do. My point is this: a system of hard and fast groups presents difficulties of construction and maintenance too great to recommend it to the average college of the future as the best mode of limiting the elective principle.¹

Probably, however, this difficulty will

¹ I am assured that at the Johns Hopkins University a student is usually allowed to drop a course in his regular group of studies and to substitute another of equal difficulty taken from some other group. No doubt this indulgence, as well as the privilege of taking extra studies, does much to mitigate the normal severity of a group system.

chiefly be felt by persons engaged in the actual work of educational organization. The outer public will think it a more serious objection that grouped colleges are in reality professional schools carried down to the limits of boyhood. So far as they hold by their groups, they are nurseries of specialization. That this is necessarily so may not at first be apparent. A little consideration of the contrast in aim between group systems and prescribed will make the matter plain. Prescribed systems have gained their long hold on popular confidence by aiming at harmonious culture. They argue, justly enough, that each separate sort of knowledge furnishes something of its own to the making of a man. This particular "something," they say, can be had from no other source. The sum of these "somethings" constitutes a rounded whole. The man who has not experienced each of them in some degree, however small, is imperfectly planned. One who has been touched by all has laid the foun-

dations of a liberal education. Degree of acquaintance with this subject or with that may subsequently enlarge. Scholarly interest may concentrate. But at the first, the proper aim is balanced knowledge, harmonious development of all essential powers, avoidance of one-sidedness.

On this aim the group system bestows but a secondary attention. Regarding primarily studies, not men, it attempts to organize single connected departments of knowledge. Accordingly it permits only those studies to be pursued together which immediately cohere. It lays out five, ten, any number of paths through the field of knowledge, and to one of these paths the pilgrim is confined. Each group constitutes a specialty, — a specialty intensified in character as, in order to escape the difficulties of maintenance just pointed out, the number of groups is allowed to increase. By insistence on specialization regard for general culture is driven into a subordinate place. The advocates of prescription main-

tain that there are not half a dozen ground-plans of perfected humanity. They say there is but one. If we introduce variety of design into a curriculum, we neglect that ideal man who resides alike in all. We trust, on the contrary, in our power to hit some line of study which may deservedly appeal to one human being while not so appealing to another. We simply note the studies which are most congruous with the special line selected, and by this congruity we shape our group. In the new aim, congruity of studies takes precedence of harmonious development of powers.

I have no doubt that specialization is destined to become more marked in the American education of the future. It must become so if we are to produce the strong departmental scholars who illuminate learning in other countries; indeed, it must become so if we are to train competent experts for the affairs of daily life. The popular distrust of specializing is sure

to grow less as our people become familiar with its effects and see how often narrow and thorough study, undertaken in early life, leads to ultimate breadth. It is a pretty dream that a man may start broad and then concentrate, but nine out of every ten strong men have taken the opposite course. They have begun in some one-sided way, and have added other sides as occasion required. Almost in his teens Shakespeare makes a specialty of the theatre, Napoleon of military science, Beethoven of music, Hunter of medicine, Hugh Miller of rocks, Faraday of chemistry, Hamilton of political science. The great body of painters, musicians, poets, novelists, theologians, politicians, are early specialists. In fact, self-made men are generally specialists. Something has aroused an interest, and they have followed it out until they have surveyed a wide horizon from a single point of view. In offering wider opportunities for specialization, colleges have merely been

assimilating their own modes of training to those which prevail in the world at large.

It does not, therefore, seem to me objectionable that group systems set a high value on specialization. That is what every man does, and every clear-eyed college must do it too. What I object to is that group systems, so far as they adhere to their aim, *enforce* specialization. Among every half dozen students, probably one will be injured if he cannot specialize largely ; two or three more might wisely specialize in lower degree ; but to force the remaining two or three into curricula shaped by professional bias is to do them serious damage. There are sober boys of little intrepidity or positive taste, boys who properly enough wish to know what others know. They will not make scholars. They were not born to enlarge the boundaries of knowledge. They have another function: they preserve and distribute such knowledge as

already exists. Many of them are persons of wealth. To furnish them glimpses of varied learning is to save them from barbarism. Still another large class is composed of boys who develop late. They are boys who will one day acquire an interest of their own, if they are allowed to roam about somewhat aimlessly in the domain of wisdom until they are twenty-one. Both of these classes have their rights. The prescribed system was built to support them ; the elective shelters and improves them ; but a group system shuts them all out, if they will not on leaving school adopt professional courses. Whenever I can hear of a group system which like the old college has a place for the indistinct young man, and like the new elective college matures him annually by suggesting that he take part in shaping his own career, I will accept the group system. Then, too, the public will probably accept it. Until then, rigid groups will be thought by many to lay too great a strain

on unseasoned powers of choice, to present too many practical difficulties of construction, and to show too doctrinaire a confidence that every youth will fit without pinching into a specialized class.





POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE ELECTIVE SYSTEM.

II.

THE preceding paper has sufficiently discussed the impossible limitations of the elective system, and has shown with some minuteness the grounds of their impossibility. The methods there examined are the only ones suggested by my critics. They all agree in this, that they seek to narrow the scope of choice. They try to combine with it a hostile factor, and they differ merely in their mode of combination. The first puts a restraining check before election; the second puts one by its side; the third makes the two inseparable by allowing nothing to be chosen which is not first prescribed. The general purpose of all these methods is

mine also. Election must be limited. Un-chartered choice is licentious and self-destructive. I quarrel with them only because the modes of effecting their purpose tend to produce results of a transient and inappropriate sort. The aim of education, as I conceive it, is to spiritualize the largest possible number of persons, that is, to teach them how to do their own thinking and willing and to do it well. But these methods effect something widely different. They either aristocratize where they should democratize, or they belittle where they should mature, or else they professionalize where they should humanize. A common trouble besets them all: the limiting authority is placed in external and arbitrary juxtaposition to the personal initiative which it professes to support. It should grow out of this initiative and be its interpreter and realization. By limitation of choice the proposers of these schemes appear to mean making choice less. I mean fortifying it,

keeping it true to itself, making it more. Control that diminishes the quantity of choice is one thing ; control that raises the quality, quite another. How important is this distinction and how frequently it is forgotten ! Words like " limitation," " control," " authority," " obedience," are words of majesty, but words also of doubtful import. They carry a freight of wisdom or of folly, according to the end towards which they steer. In order to sanction or discard limitations which induce obedience, we must bear that end in mind. Let us stop a moment, and see that we have it in mind now.

· Old educational systems are often said to have erred by excess of authority. I could not say so. The elective system, if it is to possess the future, must become as authoritative as they. More accurately we say that their authority was of a wrong sort. A father may exercise an authority over his child no less directive than that of the master over the slave ;

but the father is trying to accomplish something which the master disregards; the father hopes to make the will of another strong, the master to make it weak; the father commands what the child himself would wish, had he sufficient experience. The child's obedience accordingly enlightens, steadies, invigorates his independent will. Invigoration is the purpose of the command. The authority is akin — secretly akin — to the child's own desires. No alien power intervenes, as when a slave obeys. Here a foreign will thwarts the slave's proper motions. Over against his own legitimate desires, the desire of a totally different being appears and claims precedence. Obedience like this brings no ennoblement. The oftener a child obeys, the less of a child is he; the oftener a slave, the more completely he is a slave. Roughly to say, then, that submission to authority is healthy for a college boy, argues a mental confusion. There are two kinds of authority, — the

authority of moral guidance, and the authority of repressive control: parental authority, respecting and vivifying the individual life and thus continually tending to supersede itself; and masterly authority, whose command, out of relation to the obeyer's wish, tends ever to bring the obedient into bondage. Which shall college authority be? Authority is necessary, ever-present authority. If the young man's choice is to become a thing of worth, it must be encompassed with limitations. But as the need of these limitations springs from the imperfections of choice, so should their aim be to perfect choice, not to repress it. To impose limitations which do not ultimately enlarge the youth they bind is to make the means of education "oblige against its main end."

This moral authority is what the new education seeks. To a casual eye, the colleges of to-day seem to be growing disorganized; a closer view shows construction taking place, but taking place

along the lines of the vital distinction just pointed out. Men are striving to bring about a germane and ethical authority in the room of the baser mechanical authorities of the past. In this distinction, then, a clew is to be found which, if followed up, will lead us away from impossible limitations of the elective system, and conduct us at length to the possible, nay, to the inevitable ones. As the elective principle is essentially ethical, its limitations, if helpfully congruous, must be ethical too. They must be simply the means of bringing home to the young chooser the sacred conditions of choice ; which conditions, if I rightly understand them, may compactly be entitled those of intentionality, information, and persistence. To secure these conditions, limitations exist. In the very nature of choice, such conditions are implied. Choice is sound as they prevail, whimsical as they diminish. An education which lays stress on the elective principle is bound to lay stress on these

conditions also. It cannot slip over into lazy ways of letting its students drift, and still look for credit as an elective system. People will distrust it. That is why they distrust Harvard to-day. The objections brought against the elective system of Harvard are in reality not levelled against the elective system at all. They are directed against its bastard brother, *laissez-faire*. Objectors suspect that the conditions of choice which I have named are not fulfilled. They are not fulfilled, I confess, or rather I stoutly maintain. To come anywhere near fulfilling them requires long time and study, and action unimpeded by a misconceiving community. Both time and study Harvard has given, has given largely. The records of scholarship and deportment which I exhibited in my first paper show in how high a degree Harvard has already been able to remove from choice the capricious, ignorant, and unsteadfast characteristics which rightly bring it into disrepute. But much re-

mains to do, and in that doing we are hampered by the fact that a portion of the public is still looking in wrong directions. It cannot get over its hankering after the delusive modes of limitation which I have discussed. It does not persistently see that at present the proper work of education is the study of means by which self-direction may be rendered safe. Leaders of education themselves see this but dimly, as the papers of my critics naively show. Until choice was frankly accepted as the fit basis for the direction of a person by a person, its fortifying limitations could not be studied. Now they must be studied, now that the old methods of autocratic control are breaking down. As a moral will comes to be recognized as the best sort of steam power, the modes of generating that power acquire new claims to attention. Henceforth the training of the will must be undertaken by the elective system as an integral part of its discipline.

I am not so presumptuous as to attempt to prophesy the precise forms which methods of moral guidance will take. Moral guidance is a delicate affair. Its spirit is more important than its procedure. Flexibility is its strength. Methods final, rigid, and minute do not belong to it. Nor can it afford to forget the one great truth of *laissez-faire*, that wills which are to be kept fresh and vigorous will not bear much looking after. Time, too, is an important factor in the shaping of moral influences. Experiments now in progress at Harvard and elsewhere must discriminate safe from unsafe limitations. Leaving then to the future the task of showing how wide the scope of maturing discipline may become, I will merely try to sketch the main lines along which experiments are now proceeding, I will give a few illustrative examples of what is being done and why, and I will state somewhat at large how, in my judgment, more is yet to be accomplished. To make the matter clear,

a free exposition shall be given of the puzzling headings already named ; that is, I will first ramblingly discuss the limitations on choice which may deepen the student's intentionality of aim ; secondly, those which increase his information in regard to means ; and thirdly, those which may strengthen his persistence in a course once chosen.

I. That intentionality should be cultivated, I need not spend many words in explaining. Everybody acknowledges that without a certain degree of it choice is impossible. Many persons assert also that boys come to college with no clear intentions, not knowing what they want, waiting to be told ; for such, it is said, an elective system is manifestly absurd. I admit the fact. It is true. The majority of the freshmen whom I have known in the last seventeen years have been, at entrance, deficient in serious aims. But from this fact I draw a conclusion quite opposite to the one suggested. It is elec-

tion, systematized election, which these boys need ; for when we say a young student has no definite aims, we imply that he has never become sufficiently interested in any given intellectual line to have acquired the wish to follow that line farther. Such a state of things is lamentable, and certainly shows that prescribed methods — the proper methods, in my judgment, for the school years — have proved inadequate. It is useless to continue them into years confessedly less suited to their exercise. Perhaps it is about equally useless to abandon the ill-formed boy to unguided choice. Prescription says, "This person is unfit to choose, keep him so ;" *laissez-faire* says, "If he is unfit to choose, let him perish ;" but a watchful elective system must say, "Granting him to be unfit, if he is not spoiled, I will fit him." And can we fit him ? I know well enough that indifferent teachers incline to shirk the task. They like to divide pupils into the deceptive classes of good and bad,

meaning by the former those who intend to work, and by the latter those who intend not to. But we must get rid of indifferent teachers. Teachers with enthusiasm in them soon discover that the two classes of pupils I have named may as well be dismissed from consideration. Where aims have become definite, a teacher has little more to do. The boy who means to work will get learning under the poorest teacher and the worst system ; while the boy who means not to work may be forced up to the Pierian spring, but will hardly be made to drink. A vigorous teacher does not assume intention to be ready-made. He counts it his continual office to help in making it. On the middle two quarters of a class he spends his hardest efforts, on students who are friendly to learning but not impassioned for it, on those who like the results of study but like tennis also, and popularity, and cigars, and slackness. The culture of these weak wills is the problem of every college. Here are

unintentional boys waiting to be turned into intentional men. What limitations on intellectual and moral vagrancy will help them forward?

The chief limitation, the one underlying all others, the one which no clever contrivance can ever supersede, is vitalized teaching. Suitable subjects, attractively taught, awake lethargic intention as nothing else can. An elective system, as even its enemies confess, enormously stimulates the zeal of teachers. It consequently brings to bear on unawakened boys influences of a strangely quickening character. When I hear a man trained under the old methods of prescription say, "At the time I was in college I could not have chosen studies for myself, and I do not believe my son can," I see, and am not surprised to see, that he does not understand what forces the elective system sets astir. So powerful an influence have these forces over both teachers and pupils, that questions of hard and easy studies do not, as out-

siders are apt to suppose, seriously disturb the formation of sound intentions. The many leaders in education whose opinions on election I quoted in my previous paper agree that the new modes tend to sobriety and intentionality of aim. When Professor Ladd speaks of "the unexpected wisdom and manliness of the choices already made" in the first year of election at New Haven, he well expresses the gratified surprise which every one experiences on perceiving in the very constitution of the elective system a sort of limitation on wayward choice. This limitation seems to me, as Professor Ladd says he found it,¹ a tolerable preventive of choices directly aimed at ease. In a community devoted to athletics, base ball is not played 'because it is "soft," and foot-ball avoided on account of

¹ "Doubtless some have carried out the intention of making everything as soft as possible for themselves. But the choices, in fact, do not as yet show the existence of any such intention in any considerable number of cases; they show rather the very reverse." — Professor Ladd in *The New Englander*, January, 1885, p. 119.

its difficulty. A similar state of things must be brought about in studies. In a certain low degree it has come about already. As election breeds new life in teaching, the old slovenly habit of liking best what costs least begins to disappear. Easy courses will exist and ought to exist. Prescribed colleges, it is often forgotten, have more of them than elective colleges. The important matter is, to see that they fall to the right persons. Where everything is prescribed, students who do not wish easy studies are still obliged to take them. Under election, soft courses may often be pursued with advantage. A student whose other courses largely depend for their profit on the amount of private reading or of laboratory practice accomplished in connection with them is wise in choosing one or more in which the bulk of the work is taken by the teacher. I do not say that soft courses are always selected with these wise aims in view. Many I know are not. We have our proper

share of hardened loafers — “tares in our sustaining corn” — who have an unerring instinct as to where they can most safely settle. But large numbers of the men in soft courses are there to good purpose ; and I maintain that the superficial study of a subject, acquainting one with broad outlines, is not necessarily a worthless study. At Harvard to-day I believe we have too few such superficial courses. As I look over the Elective Pamphlet, and note the necessarily varying degrees of difficulty in the studies announced there, I count but six which can, with any justice, be entitled soft courses ; and several of these must be reckoned by anybody an inspiration to the students who pursue them. There is a tendency in the elective system, as I have shown elsewhere, to reduce the number of soft courses somewhat below the desirable number.

I insist, therefore, that under a pretty loose elective system boys are little disposed to intentionally vicious choices.

My fears look in a different direction. I do not expect depravity, but I want to head off aimless trifling. I agree with the opponents of election in thinking that there is danger, especially during the early years of college life, that righteous intention may not be distinct and energetic. Boys drift. Inadequate influences induce their decisions. The inclinations of the clique in which a young man finds himself are, without much thought, accepted as his own. Heedlessness is the young man's bane. It should not be mistaken for vice ; the two are different. A boy who will enter a dormitory at twelve o'clock at night, and go to the third story whistling and beating time on the banisters, certainly seems a brutish person ; but he is ordinarily a kind enough fellow, capable of a good deal of self-sacrifice when brought face to face with need. He simply does not think. So it is in study : there, too, he does not think. Now in college a boy should learn perpetually to think ; and an

excellent way of helping him to learn is to ask him often what he is thinking about. The object of the questioning should not be to thwart the boy's aims, rather to insure that they are in reality his own. Essentially his to the last they should remain, even though intrinsically they may not be the best. Young persons, much more than their elders, require to talk over plans from time to time with an experienced critic, in order to learn by degrees the difficult art of planning. By such talk intentionality is fortified. There is much of this talk already; talk of younger students with older, talk with wise persons at home, and more and more every year with the teachers of the courses left and the courses entered. All this is good. Haphazard modes breed an astonishing average of choices that possess a meaning. The waste of a *laissez-faire* system comes nowhere near the waste of a prescribed. But what is good when compared with a bad thing may be poor when compared

with excellence itself. We must go on. A college, like a man, should always be saying, "Never was I so good as to-day, and never again will I be so bad." We must welcome criticisms more than praises, and seek after our weak points as after hid treasures. The elective system seems to me weak at present through lacking organized means of bringing the student and his intentions face to face. Intentions grow by being looked at. At the English universities a young man on entering a college is put in charge of a special tutor, without whose consent he can do little either in the way of study or of personal management.¹ Dependence so extreme is perhaps better suited to an infant school than to an American college; and even in England, where respectful subservience on the part of the young has been cultivated

¹ As the minute personal care given to individual students in the English universities is often and deservedly praised, I may as well say that it costs something. Oxford spends each year about \$2,000,000 on 2,500 men; Harvard, \$650,000 on 1,700.

for generations, the system is losing ground. Since the tutors were allowed to marry and to leave the college home, tutorial influence has been changing. In most American colleges twenty-five years ago there were officers known as class tutors, to whom, in case of need, a student might turn. Petty permissions were received from these men, instead of from a mechanical central office. So far as this plan set personal supervision in the place of routine it was, in my eyes, good. But the relation of a class tutor to his boys was usually one of more awe than friendship. At the Johns Hopkins University there is a board of advisers, to some member of which each student is assigned at entrance. The adviser stands *in loco parentis* to his charges. The value of such adjustments depends on the nature of the parental tie. If the relation is worked so as to stimulate the student's independence, it is good ; if so as to discharge him from responsibility, it unfits for the life that follows. At Harvard

special students not candidates for a degree have recently been put in charge of a committee, to whom they are obliged to report their previous history and their plans of study for each succeeding year. The committee must know at all times what their charges are doing. Something of this sort, I am convinced, will be demanded at no distant day, as a means of steadying all students in elective colleges. Large personal supervision need not mean diminution of freedom. A young man may possess his freedom more solidly if he recognizes an obligation to state and defend the reasons which induce his choice. For myself, I should be willing to make the functions of such advisory committees somewhat broad. As a college grows, the old ways of bringing about acquaintance between officers and students become impracticable. But the need of personal acquaintance, unhappily, does not cease. New ways should be provided. A boy dropped into the middle of a large college

must not be lost to sight ; he must be looked after. To allow the teacher's work of instruction to become divorced from his pastoral, his priestly, function is to cheapen and externalize education. I would have every student in college supplied with somebody who might serve as a discretionary friend : and I should not think it a disadvantage that such an expectation of friendship would be as apt to better the instructor as the student.

Before leaving this part of my subject, I may mention a subordinate, but still valuable, means of limiting choice so as to increase its intentionality. The studies open to choice in the early years should be few and elementary. The significance of advanced courses cannot be understood till elementary ones are mastered, and immature choice should not be confused by many issues. At Harvard this mode of limitation is largely employed. Although the elective list for 1886-87 shows 172 courses, a freshman has hardly more

than one eighth of these to choose from ; in any given case this number will probably be reduced about one half by insufficient preparation or conflict of hours. Seemingly about a third of the list is offered to the average sophomore ; but this amount is again cut down nearly one half by the operation of similar causes. The practice of hedging electives with qualifications is a growing one. It may well grow more. It offers guidance precisely at the point where it is most needed. It protects rational choice, and guards against many of the dangers which the foes of election justly dread.

II. A second class of limitations of the elective system, possible and friendly, springs from the need of furnishing the young elector ample information about that which he is to choose. The best intentions require judicious aim. If studies are taken in the dark, without right anticipation of their subject-matter, or in ignorance of their relation to other studies,

small results follow. Here, I think it will be generally agreed, prescribed systems are especially weak. Their pupils have little knowledge beforehand of what a course is designed to accomplish. Work is undertaken blindly, minds consenting as little as wills. An elective system is impossible under such conditions. Its student must know when he chooses, what he chooses. He must be able to estimate whether the choice of Greek 5 will further his designs better than the choice of Greek 8.

At Harvard, methods of furnishing information are pretty fully developed. In May an elective pamphlet is issued, which announces everything that is to be taught in the college during the following year. Most departments, also, issue additional pamphlets, describing with much detail the nature of their special courses, and the considerations which should lead a student to one rather than another. If the courses of a department are arranged

properly, pursuing one gives the most needful knowledge about the available next. This knowledge is generally supplemented at the close of the year by explanations on the part of the instructor about the courses that follow. In the Elective Pamphlet a star, prefixed to courses of an advanced and especially technical character, indicates that the instructor must be privately consulted before these courses can be chosen. Consultations with instructors about all courses are frequent. That most effective means of distributing information, the talk of students, goes on unceasingly. With time, perhaps, means may be devised for informing a student more largely what he is choosing. The fullest information is desirable. That which is at present most needed is, I think, some rough indication of the relations of the several provinces of study to one another. Information of this sort is peculiarly hard to supply, because the knowledge on which it professes to rest

cannot be precise and unimpeachable. We deal here with intricate problems, in regard to which experts are far from agreed, problems where the different point of view provided in the nature of each individual will rightly readjust whatever general conclusions are drawn. The old type of college had an easy way of settling these troublesome matters dogmatically, by voting, in open faculty-meeting, what should be counted the normal sequence of studies, and what their mixture. But as the votes of different colleges showed no uniformity, people have gradually come to perceive that the subject is one where only large outlines can distinctly be made out.¹ To

¹ I may not have a better opportunity than this to clear up a petty difficulty which seems to agitate some of my critics. They say they want the degree of A. B. to mean something definite, while at present, under the elective system, it means one thing for John Doe, and something altogether different for his classmate, Richard Roe. That is true. Besides embodying the general signification that the bearer has been working four years in a way to satisfy college guardians, the stately letters do take on an individual variation of meaning for

these large outlines I think it important to direct the attention of undergraduates. In most German universities a course of *Encyclopädie* is offered, a course which gives in brief a survey of the sciences, and attempts to fix approximately the place of each in the total organization of knowl-

every man who wins them. They must do so as long as we are engaged in the formation of living persons. If the college were a factory, our case would be different. We might then offer a label which would keep its identity of meaning for all the articles turned out. Wherever education has been a living thing, the single degree has always contained this element of variety. The German degree is as diverse in meaning as ours. The degree of the English university is diverse, and more diverse for Honors men — the only ones who can properly be said to deserve it — than for inert Pass men. Degrees in this country have, from the first, had considerable diversity, college differing from college in requirement, and certainly student from student in attainment. That twenty-five years ago we were approaching too great uniformity in the signification of degrees, I suppose most educators now admit. That was a mechanical and stagnant period, and men have brought over from it to the more active days of the present ideals formed then. Precision of statement goes with figures, with etiquette, with military matters ; but descriptions of the quality of persons must be stated in the round.

edge. I am not aware that such a course exists in any American college. Indeed, there was hardly a place for it till dogmatic prescription was shaken. But if something of the kind were now established in the freshman year, our young men might be relieved of a certain intellectual short-sightedness, and the choices of one year might better keep in view those of the other three.

III. And now granting that a student has started with good intentions and is well informed about the direction where profit lies, still have we any assurance that he will push those intentions with a fair degree of tenacity through the distractions which beset his daily path? We need, indeed we must have, a third class of helpful limitations which may secure the persistent adhesion of our student to his chosen line of work. Probably this class of limitations is the most important and complex of all. To yield a paying return, study must be stuck to. A decision has

little meaning unless the volition of to-day brings in its train a volition to-morrow. Self-direction implies such patient continuance in well-doing that only after persistence has become somewhat habitual can choice be called mature. To establish onward-leading habits, therefore, should be one of the chief objects in devising limitations of election. Only we must not mistake ; we must look below the surface. Mechanical diligence often covers mental sloth. It is not habits of passive docility that are desirable, habits of timidity and uncriticising acceptance. Against forming these pernicious and easily acquired habits, it may be necessary even to erect barriers. The habit wanted is the habit of spontaneous attack. Prescription dead-
ened this vital habit ; it mechanized. His task removed, the student had little independent momentum. Election invigorates the springs of action. Formerly I did not see this, and I favored prescribed systems, thinking them systems of duty.

That absence of an aggressive intellectual life which prescribed studies induce, I, like many others, mistook for faithfulness. Experience has instructed me. I no longer have any question that for the average man sound habits of steady endeavor grow best in fields of choice. Emerson's words are words of soberness:—

“He that worketh high and wise
Nor pauses in his plan,
Will take the sun out of the skies
Ere freedom out of man.”

Furthermore, in attempting to stimulate persistence I believe we must ultimately rely on the rational interest in study which we can arouse and hold. Undoubtedly much can be done to save this interest from disturbance and to hold vacillating attention fixed upon it; but it, and it alone, is to be the driving force. Methods of college government must be reckoned wise as they push into the foreground the intrinsic charm of wisdom, mischievous as they hide it behind fidelity to technical

demand. In other matters we readily acknowledge interest as an efficient force. We call it a force as broad as the worth of knowledge, and as deep as the curiosity of man. "Put your heart into your work," we say, "if you will make it excellent." A dozen proverbs tell that it is love that makes the world go round. Every employment of life springs from an underlying desire. The cricketer wants to win the game; the fisherman to catch fish; the farmer to gather crops; the merchant to make money; the physician to cure his patient; the student to become wise. Eliminate desire, put in its place allegiance to the rules of a game, and what, in any of these cases, would be the chance of persistent endeavor? It seems almost a truism to say that limitations of personal effort designed to strengthen persistency must be such as will heighten the wish and clear its path to its object.

Obvious as is the truth here presented, it seems in some degree to have escaped

the attention of my critics. After showing that the grade of scholarship at Harvard steadily rises, that our students become more decorous and their methods of work less childish, I stated that, under an extremely loose mode of regulating attendance five sixths of the exercises were attended by all our men, worst and best, sick and well, most reckless and most discreet. Few portions of my obnoxious paper have occasioned a louder outcry. I am told of a neighboring college where the benches show but three per cent of absentees. I wonder what the percentage is in Charlestown State Prison. Nobody doubts that attendance will be closer if compelled. But the interesting question still remains, "Are students by such means learning habits of spontaneous regularity?" This question can be answered only when the concealing restraint is removed. It has been removed at Harvard, — in my judgment too largely removed, — and the great body of our students are seen

to desire learning and to desire it all the time. Is it certain that the students of other colleges, if left with little or no restraint, would show a better record? The point of fidelity and regularity, it is said, is of supreme importance. So it is. But fidelity and regularity in study, not in attending recitations. If ever the Harvard system is perfected, so that students here are as eager for knowledge as the best class of German university men, I do not believe we shall see a lower rate of absence; only then, each absence will be used, as it is not at present, for a studious purpose. The modern teacher stimulates private reading, exacts theses, directs work in libraries. Pupils engaged in these things are not dependent on recitations as textbook school-boys are. The grade of higher education cannot rise much so long as the present extreme stress is laid on appearance in the class-room.

In saying this I would not be understood to defend the method of dealing with

absences which has for some years been practised at Harvard. I think the method bad. I have always thought it so, and have steadily favored a different system. The behavior of our students under a regulation so loose seems to me a striking testimony to the scholarly spirit prevalent here. As such I mentioned it in my first paper, and as such I would again call attention to it. But I am not satisfied with the present good results. I want to impress on every student that absence from the class-room can be justified by nothing short of illness or a scholarly purpose. For a gainful purpose the merchant is occasionally absent from his office ; for a gainful purpose a scholar of mine may omit a recitation. But Smith can be absent profitably when Brown would meet with loss. I accordingly object to methods of limiting absence which exact the same numerical regularity of all. College records may look clean, yet students be learning little about duty. Limitation, in my judgment, should

be so adjusted as to strengthen the man's personal adhesion to plans of daily study. Such limitations cannot be fixed by statute and worked by a single clerk. Moral discipline is not a thing to be supplied by wholesale. Professors must be individually charged with the oversight of their men. I would have excuses for occasional absence made to the instructor, and I should expect him to count it a part of his work to see that the better purposes of his scholars did not grow feeble. A professor who exercised such supervisory power slackly would make his course the resort of the indolent; one who was over-stringent would see himself deserted by indolent and earnest alike. My rule would be that no student be allowed to present himself at an examination who could not show his teacher's certificate that his attendance on daily work was satisfactory. Traditions in this country and in Germany are so different that I should have confidence in a method working well here though it worked ill there.

At any rate, whenever it fell into decay, it could — a proviso necessary in all moral matters — be readjusted. A rule something like this the Harvard Faculty has recently adopted by voting that "any instructor, with the approval of the Dean, may at any time exclude from his course any student who in his judgment has neglected the work of the course." Probably the amount of absence which has hitherto occurred at Harvard will under this vote diminish.

Suppose, then, by these limitations on a student's caprice we have secured his persistence in outward endeavor, still one thing more is needed. We have brought him bodily to a recitation room ; but his mind must be there too, his aroused and active mind. Limitations that will secure this slippery part of the person are difficult to devise. Nevertheless, they are worth studying. Their object is plain. They are to lead a student to do something every day ; to aid him to overcome those tendencies to

procrastination, self-confidence, and passive absorption, which are the regular and calculable dangers of youth. They are to teach him how not to cram, to inspire him with respect for steady effort, and to enable him each year to find such effort more habitual to himself. These are hard tasks. The old education tried to meet them by the use of daily recitations, a plan not without advantages. The new education is preserving the valuable features of recitations by adopting and developing the *Seminar*. But recitations pure and simple have serious drawbacks. They presuppose a textbook, which, while it brings definiteness, brings also narrowness of view. The learner masters a book, not a subject. After-life possesses nothing analogous to the textbook. A struggling man wins what he wants from many books, from his own thought, from frequent consultations. Why should not a student be disciplined in the ways he must afterwards employ? Moreover, recitations have the disadvantage that

no large number of men can take part on any single day. The times of trial either become amenable to reckoning, or, in order to prevent reckoning, a teacher must resort to schemes which do not commend him to his class. Undoubtedly in recitation the reciter gains, but the gains of the rest of the class are small. The listeners would be more profited by instruction. An hour with an expert should carry students forward; to occupy it in ascertaining where they now stand is wasteful. For all these reasons there has been of late years a strong reaction against recitations. Lectures have been introduced, and the time formerly spent by a professor in hearing boys is now spent by boys in hearing a professor. Plainly in this there is a gain, but a gain which needs careful limitation if the student's persistence in work is to be retained. A pure lecture system is a broad road to ignorance. Students are entertained or bored, but at the end of a month they know little more than at the

beginning. Lectures always seem to me an inheritance from the days when books were not. Learning — how often must it be said! — is not acceptance; it is criticism, it is attack, it is doing. An active element is everywhere involved in it. Personal sanction is wanted for every step. One who will grow wise must perform processes himself, not sit at ease and behold another's performance.

These simple truths are now tolerably understood at Harvard. There remain in the college few courses of pure recitations or of pure lectures. I wish all were forbidden by statute. In almost all courses, in one way or another, frequent opportunity is given the student to show what he is doing. In some, especially in elementary courses, lectures run parallel with a text-book. In some, theses, that is, written discussions, are exacted monthly, half-yearly, annually, in addition to examinations. In some, examinations are frequent. In some, a daily question, to be answered in writing

on the spot, is offered to the whole class. Often, especially in philosophical subjects, the hour is occupied with debate between officer and students. More and more, physical subjects are taught by the laboratory, linguistic and historical by the library. In a living university a great variety of methods spring up, according to the nature of the subject and the personality of the teacher. Variety should exist. In constantly diversified ways each student should be assured that he is expected to be doing something all the time, and that somebody besides himself knows what he is doing. As yet this assurance is not attained; we can only claim to be working toward it. Every year we discover some fresh limitation which will make persistence more natural, neglect more strange. I believe study at Harvard is to-day more interested, energetic, and persistent than it has ever been before. But that is no ground for satisfaction. A powerful college must forever be dissatisfied. Each year it must

address itself anew to strengthening the tenacity of its students in their zeal for knowledge.

By the side of these larger limitations in the interest of persistency, it may be well to mention one or two examples of smaller ones which have the same end in view. By some provision it must be made difficult to withdraw from a study once chosen. Choice should be deliberate and then be final. It probably will not be deliberate unless it is understood to be final. A few weeks may be allowed for an inspection of a chosen course, but at the close of the first month's teaching the Harvard Faculty tie up their students and allow change only on petition and for the most convincing cause. An elective college which did not make changes of electives difficult would be an engine for discouraging intentionality and persistence.


I incline to think, too, that a regulation forbidding elementary courses in the later years would render our education more

coherent. In this matter elective colleges have an opportunity which prescribed ones miss. In order to be fair to all the sciences, College Faculties are obliged to scatter fragments of them throughout the length and breadth of prescribed curricula. Twenty-five years ago every Harvard man waited till his senior year before beginning philosophy, acoustics, history, and political economy. To-day the fourteen other New England colleges, most of whom, like the Harvard of twenty-five years ago, offer a certain number of elective studies, still show senior years largely occupied with elementary studies. Five forbid philosophy before the senior year ; eight, political economy ; two, history ; six, geology. Out of the seven colleges which offer some one of the eastern languages, all except Harvard oblige the alphabet to be learned in the senior year. Of the six which offer Italian or Spanish, Harvard alone permits a beginning to be made before the junior year, while two take up these languages

for the first time in the senior year. In three New England colleges German cannot be begun till the junior year. In a majority, a physical subject is begun in the junior and another in the senior year. At Yale nobody but a senior can study chemistry. Such postponement, and by consequence such fragmentary work, may be necessary where early college years are crowded with prescribed studies. But an elective system can employ its later years to better advantage. It can bring to a mature understanding the interests which freshmen and sophomores have already acquired. Elementary studies are not maturing studies; they do not make the fibre of a student firm. To studies of a solidifying sort the last years should be devoted. I should like to forbid seniors to take any elementary study whatever, and to forbid juniors all except philosophy, political economy, history, fine arts, Sanskrit, Hebrew, and law. Under such a rule we should graduate more men who would be first rate

at something ; and a man who is first rate at something is generally pretty good at anything.

Such, then, are a few examples of the ways in which choice may be limited so as to become strong. They are but examples, intended merely to draw attention to the three kinds of limitation still possible. Humble ways they may seem, not particularly interesting to hear about ; business methods one might call them. But by means of these and such as these the young scholar becomes clearer in intention, larger in information, hardier in persistence. In urging such means I shall be seen to be no thick and thin advocate of election. That I have never been. Originally a doubter, I have come to regard the elective system, that is, election under such limitations as I have described, as the safest — indeed as the only possible — course which education can now take. I advocate it heartily as a system which need not carry us too fast or too far in any



one direction, as a system so inherently flexible that its own great virtues readily unite with those of an alien type. Under its sheltering charge the worthier advantages of both grouped and prescribed systems are attainable. I proclaim it, therefore, not as a popular cry nor as an educational panacea, but as a sober opportunity for moral and intellectual training. Limited as it is at Harvard, I see that it works admirably with the studious, stimulatingly with those of weaker will, not unendurably with the depraved. These are great results. They cannot be set aside by calling them the outcome of "individualism." In a certain sense they are. But "individualism" is an uncertain term. In every one of us there is a contemptible individuality, grounded in what is ephemeral and capriciously personal. Systematic election, as I have shown, puts limitations on this. But there is a noble individuality which should be the object of our fostering care. Nothing that lends it strength and

fineness can be counted trivial. To form a true individuality is, indeed, the ideal of the elective system. Let me briefly sketch my conception of that ideal.

George Herbert, praising God for the physical world which He has made, says that in it "all things have their will, yet none but thine." Such a free harmony between thinking man and a Lord of his thought it is the office of education to bring about. At the start it does not exist. The child is aware of his own will, and he is aware of little else. He imagines that one pleasing fancy may be willed as easily as another. As he matures, he discovers that his will is effective when it accords with the make of the world and ineffective when it does not. This discovery, bringing as it does increased respect for the make of the world and even for its maker, degrades or ennobles according as the facts of the world are now viewed as restrictive finalities or as an apparatus for larger self-expression. See-

ing the power of that which is not himself, a man may become passively receptive, and say, "Then I am to have no will of my own ;" or he may become newly energetic, knowing that though he can have no will of his separate own, yet all the power of God is his if he will but understand. A man of the latter sort is spiritually educated. Much still remains to be done in understanding special laws ; and with each fresh understanding, a fresh possibility of individual life is disclosed. The worth, however, of the whole process lies in the man's honoring his own will, but honoring it only as it grows strong through accordance with the will of God.

Now into our colleges comes a mixed multitude made up of all the three classes named : the childish, who imagine they can will anything ; the docile, so passive in the presence of an ordered world that they have little individual will left ; the spiritually-minded or original, who with strong interests of their own seek to de-

velop these through living contact with truths which they have not made. Our educational modes must meet them all, respecting their wills wherever wise, and teaching the feeble to discriminate fanciful from righteous desires. For carrying forward such a training the elective system seems to me to have peculiar aptitudes. What I have called its limitations will be seen to be spiritual assistances. To the further invention of such there is no end. A watchful patience is the one great requisite, patience in directors, instructed criticism on the part of the public, and a brave expression of confidence when confidence is seen to have been earned.







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